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NEA Today

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A NEWSPAPER FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

VOL.1 , NO.1

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Duane Howell, *Denver Post*

Marianne Reichert didn't return to her classroom this fall.

She was RIFfed, laid off, nonrenewed, SACKED. After seven years as a substitute and three more as a regular elementary school teacher in Longmont, Colorado, Marianne Reichert was declared expendable. So she said goodbye to her first graders, cleaned out her desk, and drove home to put her life back together. Marianne Reichert is not alone. From Washington State to Massachusetts, thousands of teaching and school support positions have been abolished for a whole host of reasons—tight local budgets, federal aid cuts, declining enrollments. The RIF victims are gone. The impact of layoffs, however, lingers on—touching students, colleagues, the community.

More on page 4.

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Welcome to 'NEA Today'

With the publication of this first issue of *NEA Today*, the Association continues its tradition of responsiveness to your needs and readiness for revision in the light of new realities.

Our decision to restructure our major publications is rooted in a simple understanding: there is virtue in continuity, but not in complacency—in the steadfast, but not in the static.

For years NEA's major periodicals have reflected a division of labor—the quarterly *Today's Education* focusing on members' professional lives, the eight-times-yearly *NEA Reporter* covering primarily members' organizational involvement.

Today this distinction between the instructional and the organizational seems a bit archaic. In 1982, the pedagogical and the political intersect as never before. The issues are all of one interrelated piece—and all are thorny.

Our publications have been revamped accordingly. The first annual edition of *Today's Education* that you received a few weeks ago brings together Association news, instructional guidelines, political commentary, and human interest stories.

This spectrum of features is designed to serve you as a member of the education community, as a key participant in Association efforts, and as an individual with unique personal needs and interests. The annual's scope and variety make it a resource that you'll find yourself turning to—and returning to—throughout the year.

What you're now holding in

NEA President
Willard McGuire

your hands—our new tabloid—shows the same integration of issues. It addresses the diversity of concerns that we in the education community share. And it aims to be as timely as the annual edition of *Today's Education* is comprehensive.

The eight issues each school year will cover today's Association universe: classroom and lecture hall, lunchroom and courtroom, teaching strategies and bargaining strategies, political problems and pedagogical puzzles.

The newness of *NEA Today* begins with the format, which has been totally redesigned to accommodate greater variety and more content. You'll also find a more personal touch: tips on everything from family financial planning to leisure activities and health safeguards, a debate feature (often with your colleagues slugging it out), and a "people" page where you'll meet the mavericks, the moderates, and the in-betweens of the NEA family.

Not everything in these pages is new, of course. You'll encounter old friends both from the *Reporter* (for example, "TV Tips" and the "Human Rights Report") and from the quarterly *Today's Education* (for example, "Trends" and "Idea Exchange").

Our approach in our two new publications is more all-embracing than in the past. Our concerns have broadened as the contemporary climate has shifted. But our commitment remains what it has always been—to serve you, the member, and to forward the goals announced in NEA's 1857 Charter: "to elevate the character and advance the interests of the profession of teaching and to promote the cause of popular education in the United States."

We believe our new newspaper is at once true to those timeless goals and responsive to the challenge of new times. We welcome your reactions.

TRENDS

TeleViolence . . .

Exposure to acts of violence on television can trigger exaggerated aggressiveness in children, according to "Television and Behavior," a new report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The report, based on 10 years of study, also notes that the incidence of violence in children's programming has increased during the last decade.

Copies of "Television and Behavior" are available free from the National Institute of Mental Health, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.

. . . And TeleVirility

"Programs targeted to our children present a world peopled almost exclusively by white Anglo-Saxon males . . .," says Kim Hays, executive director of Action for Children's Television (ACT).

An ACT study has found that TV shows remain short on minorities and females but strong on stereotyping. Females account for only one of every six major characters on programs aimed at children, and minorities are even more scarce.

Monolingual Muddle

"I desire the Poles carnally." That's the message that Jimmy Carter's official U.S. translator conveyed to the Polish people in 1977. What the former President had actually said was less exciting: he wanted to better understand the opinions and desires of the Poles.

Despite that embarrassment, the Defense Department still requires only one of every 1,500 employees to have foreign language skills. And State Department positions requiring foreign language proficiency remain unfilled.

The Reagan Administration nonetheless proposes cutting federal aid for foreign language studies. This indifference to linguistic proficiency seems peculiar in an Administration known as friendly to big business. Surely the U.S. corporate image is not improved when the slogan "Come Alive with Pepsi" appears in Chinese as "Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave."

Say What?

"Ignore the crispies. Barley's deece, I got the duckies, and the crib's without rents."

Another U.S. translator at work? No, according to Eric Black in a commentary in *Education Week* earlier this year. Rather, this sentence demonstrates today's teenagers' unique idiom.

For those who care to decipher, Black offers a lexicon: *Crispies*, n., kids who have used drugs so heavily that their brains are "toasted," syn. *fries; barley*, n., beer; *deece*, adj., all right, sweet; *duckies*, n., money, syn. *bucks* (archaic); *crib*, n., home, esp. one's own home; *rents*, n., parents.

Pregnant with Insight

The 77 percent of Americans who believe schools should provide sex education may have the solution to the epidemic of teenage pregnancies, suggests a new report by the Alan Guttmacher Institute.

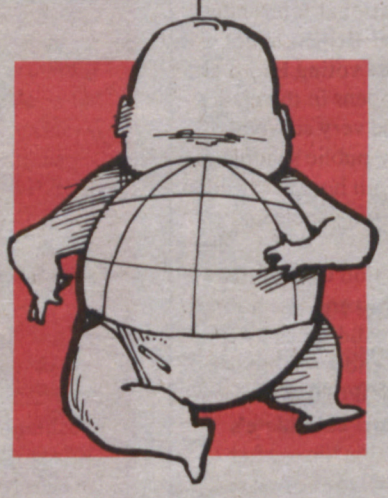
Young people need more information about sexuality, fertility control, and reproduction. And they need it, the report emphasizes, before puberty.

Copies of *Teenage Pregnancy: The Problem That Hasn't Gone Away* are available from the Guttmacher Institute, 360 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10010.

. . . And Just Plain Pregnant

More people. Lots more. That's the forecast in the 1982 *World Population Data Sheet*, a publication of the Population Reference Bureau, Inc. (PRB).

While world population has grown slowly during most of human history, it will leap from 2 billion to 10 billion people in a single century (roughly 1940-2040).



We are, claims the PRB report, in the midst of an unprecedented transformation. The ratio between populations in the less developed and more developed nations (roughly two to one in 1940) will climb to five to one by the year 2020.

Copies of the *1982 World Population Data Sheet* are available from PRB Circulation Department, P.O. Box 35012, Washington, DC 20013. Single copies, $1; 2-49 copies, 75 cents each; 50 or more, 50 cents each.

Successful Trick(le)

From the Census Bureau comes proof, finally, that the "trickle-down" theory works. The Bureau reports that median family income dropped by 3.5 percent in 1981. This means that 2.2 million more Americans trickled down beneath the official poverty level of $9,287 for a family of four.

A total of 32 million Americans—almost one in seven—were officially poor in 1981.

NEA Today

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

It's Time To Back Pro-Education Candidates

"The 1982 NEA Representative Assembly requests that each member of the Association devote at least 10 hours on the average to elect pro-education candidates to Congress on November 2, 1982."

—New Business Item 1982-77, adopted by delegates to the July 1982 NEA Representative Assembly

How are NEA members around the country spending those 10 hours this fall? From coast to coast, Association members are volunteering to canvass door-to-door or by telephone . . . write and distribute campaign literature . . . hold "meet-the-candidate" coffees . . . register new voters . . . organize phone banks . . . recruit other volunteers . . . and get out the vote.

No previous experience is required for most nuts-and-bolts campaign tasks, just a willingness to show up and pitch in. But growing numbers of members are now moving into more sophisticated political activity, thanks to NEA political training programs and a decade of experience in political endorsement. Association activists are taking leadership roles at state party conventions, managing campaigns, and in a few cases running for Congress themselves!

NEA's 1.7 million members have won respect from politicians and the media as a formidable political force with the ability to deliver—not only an army of *volunteer workers,* but also *dollars* and *votes* for candidates who support public education. Nine out of ten NEA members vote—twice the national average.

All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and 33 in the Senate are up in this pivotal off-year election. Both the primaries and the general election are being watched as a national referendum on almost two years of Reaganomics.

What happens in the voting booth always affects what happens in the classroom, but this year the very survival of America's tuition-free public school system may well depend on how many advocates of public education get elected or reelected to Congress.

NEA's Political Action Committee (NEA-PAC) expects to endorse a total of 300 congressional candidates by Election Day. NEA-PAC endorsement is a formal recommendation that NEA members contribute time to a candidate's campaign, or at least give him or her strong consideration when they go to the polls.

Bill Fischer

Members of Virginia's Fairfax and Arlington Education Associations serve on a phone bank each Tuesday night, calling 10th Congressional District voters to urge support of endorsed Democratic challenger Ira Lechner's bid to unseat Rep. Frank Wolf, a "Reagan rubber stamp" elected in 1980.

Endorsement decisions, which require agreement at both state and national Association levels, are based on candidates' positions and incumbents' voting records on major Association issues. A "report card" showing how every member of the 97th Congress voted on key questions will appear in the next issue of *NEA Today.*

As set by the NEA Representative Assembly, the issues on which all candidates have been carefully screened this year prior to endorsement include tuition tax credits, continuation of the Department of Education, the Equal Rights Amendment, and collective bargaining rights for public employees.

More than $1,000,000 has been raised for NEA-PAC's war chest since September 1981, primarily through one-on-one contact—individual members soliciting voluntary contributions from other members. NEA-PAC hopes to contribute the legal maximum ($5,000) to both the primary and general election campaigns of endorsed candidates in about 140 targeted congressional districts where such support can make a real difference —either because the race is a very close one or because the seat is open, with no incumbent running.

The top 10 states in NEA-PAC contributions rank as follows: California, Washington, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Alabama, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Florida.

—Ann Kurzius

Craig Ellis

Pennsylvania regional PACE director George Reese distributes Kolter-for-Congress leaflets in Beaver Falls. Joe Kolter's grassroots Democratic "people" campaign hopes to overcome Rep. Eugene Atkinson's heavy Republican money advantage.

At Stake:
The Future of Tuition-Free Public Schools

The battle to prevent Congress from passing tuition tax credits is coming to a head.

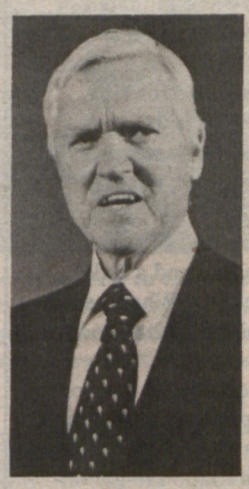
"We expect the issue to come to a vote before Congress goes home to campaign for reelection," says NEA President Willard McGuire. "Despite national polls indicating that most Americans oppose this concept of a special tax credit for parents who choose to pay private elementary and secondary school tuitions, the proponents aren't giving up.

"It's vital, therefore, that we make certain our friends in Congress understand that it's not enough merely to defeat the Administration's bill (S-2673)," McGuire adds. "We hope to *crush* the whole idea once and for all."

NEA, the National Parent Teacher Association, and the National School Boards Association have launched a nationwide petition drive to collect more than a million voter signatures against tuition tax credits. Your local Association president has a copy of the petition.

Prior to the Labor Day congressional recess, the Reagan Administration pushed hard but failed to get S-2673 out of the Senate Finance Committee. The Administration's strategy appeared to be to try for a quick Senate floor vote by attaching the tuition tax credit plan to a debt ceiling bill already passed by the House of Representatives, so that it would go directly to a House-Senate conference committee and bypass debate on the House floor. Public education supporters in the Senate were able to defeat this backdoor strategy, however.

Tuition tax credits are yet another effort to weaken and eventually destroy the public school system. There is much concern in the Senate that the federal tax credits—up to $500 per child by 1985—



Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.) is an outspoken critic of tuition tax credits. "The duty of government to public schools is to support them," he says. "The duty of government to private schools is to leave them alone."

would go to parents who send their children to private schools that practice racial, ethnic, or sex discrimination.

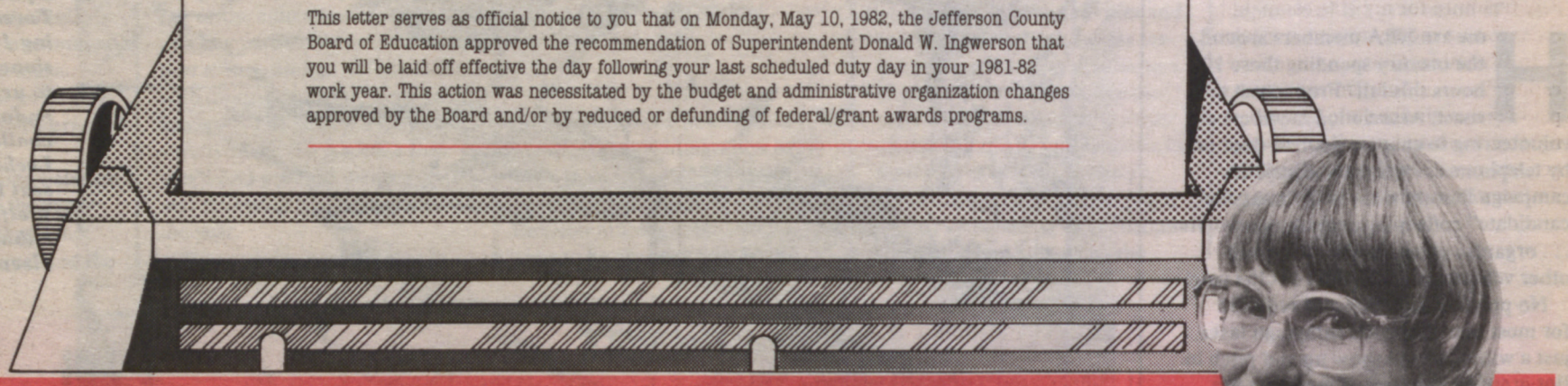
A study by the Council of Great City Schools and the American Association of School Administrators reveals that President Reagan's tax credit plan—combined with his "new federalism" budget—would result in divisive, unfair tax distributions and a dual system of federal aid to education—with the majority of direct aid going to the families who need it least.

The study shows that federal aid to large city public schools would be cut in half by 1985, dropping from an average $206 per student in 1980-81 to just $105 by 1984-85. Federal spending in the same cities per *private* school student would meanwhile jump 565 percent—from $43 in 1980-81 to $329 by 1984-85.

Tuition tax credits would mean an uncontrollable new loss of tax revenues, just when the spiraling federal deficit has led Congress and the President to reduce federal spending for vital services, including public education.

—Marian Clayton

RIF
Education's Annual Rite


This letter serves as official notice to you that on Monday, May 10, 1982, the Jefferson County Board of Education approved the recommendation of Superintendent Donald W. Ingwerson that you will be laid off effective the day following your last scheduled duty day in your 1981-82 work year. This action was necessitated by the budget and administrative organization changes approved by the Board and/or by reduced or defunding of federal/grant awards programs.

Duane Howell, *Denver Post*

"When I got that RIF notice I wondered, 'Is there something wrong with me? Could I have done a better job?' Then I realized I was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time."

It's been over three months since Marianne Reichert said goodbye to her first graders at Erie Elementary School in Longmont, Colorado, but the memory of that June day lingers—vivid and painful.

Marianne Reichert was eliminated from the classroom in the annual spring ritual known as RIF (reduction in force, the bureaucratic euphemism for layoff). Some 77 other teachers in her district met the same fate. By September, 31 of them had been rehired, but not Marianne Reichert.

"That last day of school," she recalls, "I gave each student a hug and a little message of encouragement. When I said goodbye, I thought this could be goodbye to teaching."

Since her termination, the 38-year-old mother of two has experienced emotional swings—from self-doubt to anger, sadness to despair, then determination to get on with her life.

"I never knew a person who was laid off," Reichert notes ruefully. "Now I do."

Across the country, former first grade teacher Rita Lisko has entered law school at the University of Connecticut. Lisko was RIFfed twice in two years. Her first RIF notice was rescinded when dozens of parents raised strong objections to her dismissal at several school board hearings. There was no getting around her second pink slip, however. Enrollment decline forced Rita Lisko to look for a new profession.

"I love my students and teaching," she says, "but I can't live my life and care for my own children, not knowing whether I'm going to have a job."

In Deer Park, Washington, 40 miles north of Spokane, former school aide Helen Robbins has begun a new life as a restaurant owner. Her job and those of 11 other aides were eliminated last December.

"Honestly, the memory of being laid off still brings tears to my eyes," says Robbins. "Nine years I spent as an aide—now it's over. What's worse," she adds, "is we were needed—the students knew it, teachers told us, but the administration thought otherwise."

In the midwest, industrial arts teacher Jerry Ervin is back in his classroom in South Bend, Indiana. RIFfed last spring, Ervin was rehired in July. But many of his colleagues weren't so lucky—and Ervin fears education in the South Bend schools will suffer.

"We lost some darn good teachers," he says. "For those who are left, class sizes have increased, morale is very low, students have fewer courses to choose from, and reassigned teachers are asking, 'Where will I be next year?' "

A more subtle form of RIF is occurring at some higher education institutions. At Michigan State University in East Lansing, 126 tenured and 60 tenure-stream faculty were given four options in lieu of outright termination.

The choices: work this term, then leave with 18 months' salary; leave immediately with two years' pay; accept part-time tenured status; or request assignment to other positions.

The faculty's choices were about evenly split among the four options, according to Phil Korth, president of the NEA affiliate at Michigan State. "In some units the faculty were strongly encouraged to select one of the options to protect the careers of their younger colleagues."

A few generalizations about RIFs. They—

- Often prove unnecessary (boards send out blanket nonrenewal notices to cover springtime budget uncertainties).
- Hit newer employees hardest (although in some districts year after year of RIFs have meant that 12-year veterans are now at the bottom of the seniority list and will be the next to go).
- Occur most often in the older, more urbanized parts of the country.

Even though a high percentage of the thousands of teachers and support staff who got RIF notices last spring have now been recalled, most were forced to endure months of agonizing worry. And each year, with less and less turnover on school staffs, the uncertainty about whether a slot *will* open up gets worse.

Why do RIFs occur? Administrators cite four basic reasons: sagging state and national economies, declining school enrollments, federal budget cuts, and tax and spending limitations.

Take Michigan, for example. It leads all states in unemployment, with over 14 percent of its workforce out of work at last count. Jobless rates in several localities are as high as 20 percent.

And public education is paying the price. In the past two years, some 10,000 Michigan education jobs have been axed.

Helen Robbins' home state of Washington is in the worst economic straits since the Great Depression. So far the Republican-controlled legislature has applied a band-aid approach to the state's wavering economy by passing a batch of stopgap tax increases while leaving the faulty tax structure in place.

Many Washington teachers have gone two consecutive years without pay increases, and RIFs were rampant last spring.

"Since 1978, 250 teaching positions have been lost in our school system," notes Tacoma Association of Classroom Teachers President Leon Horne. "Class loads are at maximum levels. The state has cut us off at the knees by eliminating its funding for special education, textbooks and other teaching materials, and extracurricular activities like athletics, drama, and speech. It translates into this: we are not meeting the special needs of students, in a community that has always prided itself on its excellent public schools."

California and Massachusetts offer perfect examples of property tax limits gone crazy.

California's once huge budget surplus, which cushioned local school districts' tax revenue losses initially under Proposition 13, has now dried up. The state budget for this school year provides no increase for public schools, spelling probable RIFs ahead for teachers in many localities.

The Massachusetts version of Prop 13, Prop 2½, has brought the layoff of some 7,000 teachers since its passage in 1980.

Meanwhile, just as school districts are scraping for dollars, the federal government has turned into a shrinking violet. Since President Reagan took office, annual federal aid to public schools has been cut by $2 billion.

The Holyoke, Massachusetts, school system illustrates how federal budget cuts can hurt. Of 35 tenured teachers laid off last spring, 21 were the direct result of federal cutbacks in compensatory and vocational education programs.

Still, not all the damage can be blamed on forces outside the local school district. In many places, instruction and the

teachers and support staff who make it happen have been shortchanged, while other less important school budget items continue to get high priority.

In Colorado's St. Vrain Valley district, where Marianne Reichert taught, school officials claimed that a million-dollar budget deficit forced the axing of 55 teaching positions. Reichert wonders about that. Before the RIFs, the administration was touting the need for new buildings and equipment, and citizens approved a special levy for those purposes.

A few months later, when voters were asked to approve another levy that could have saved teachers' jobs, the community predictably turned thumbs down.

"I question the administration's priorities," says Reichert. "Before I was RIFfed, the principal said I could order new furniture for my classroom, but there was no money to save our jobs."

In Wyoming, Guernsey-Sunrise Education Association members (the lowest paid teachers in the state) have been fighting tooth and nail for more than the 5 percent pay hike the school board offered this year. Meanwhile their superintendent takes home $48,000 (including $10,000 in stress pay) as one of the state's higher-paid superintendents.

Overestimating expenses and underestimating revenues, "hiding" money in special funds, and carrying over unusually large surpluses are other favorite administration practices.

Elsewhere, school boards have skirted legal protections, especially those dealing with the timing and reasons for RIF notices.

Countering these practices is a full-time job, and NEA affiliates are fighting back at the bargaining table, in the courts, and sometimes in the streets.

"Bargaining for teachers' jobs is not a new concept," says Minnesota Education Association (MEA) President Don Hill, "but having to face outright vengeful school boards is difficult to stomach as a teacher and a parent."

MEA now has court suits pending against 12 school districts, most charging failure to prove a financial need for RIFs or violation of teachers' due process rights. Some 4,000 Minnesota teachers were RIFfed last spring.

Prince George's County (Maryland) Educators Association (PGCEA) members are fighting back against two formidable obstacles—a county executive who prides himself on union busting, and a tax limitation measure called TRIM which has tied the county into a financial straitjacket.

The local has filed grievances on behalf of 150 teachers who were laid off in violation of their contract rights. It has also successfully lobbied for changes in the state's unemployment compensation program so that laid-off school employees can qualify for extended jobless benefits.

In coalition with county PTAs, PGCEA helped collect more than 10,000 signatures on a petition to place an amendment on the November ballot that would allow a 4 percent annual increase in tax collections. TRIM caps property tax revenues at 1978 levels, not even allowing for inflation.

Local and state Associations and the NEA are also directing their resources toward helping RIFfed members deal with unemployment and begin anew.

In Connecticut, where 800 teachers were RIFfed last year, the Connecticut Education Association provides a survival booklet for members who have been RIFfed or think they might be. It covers legal rights during layoff, withdrawal of funds from the retirement system, recall procedures, and Association membership during layoff. The guide also includes a sample letter for requesting a termination hearing, a list of school superintendents, and a list of Connecticut's 100 largest employers.

In Ohio, where as many as 7,000 teachers received layoff notices this spring—over 20 percent of the teaching staff in some districts—the Ohio Education Association has compiled an "Employment Resource Kit." It includes a summary of OEA/NEA legal services, a list of UniServ offices, a special form for ordering a printout of accrued benefits, and questions and answers on unemployment comp. OEA has also sponsored job seminars on "creative alternatives for teachers."

The Massachusetts Teachers Association provides its RIFfed members with similar unemployment information, encourages teachers to become certified in other areas, and offers listings of job openings. A few teachers have been retrained to work in computer-related jobs through a program jointly funded by the Association and the state's "high-technology" firms.

The Michigan Education Association offers a series of career planning workshops that range from writing resumes and sharpening interviewing skills to reducing the frustration about career change. MEA also contacts its sister Associations around the country to find job vacancies in other states and publicizes them to its members.

At NEA's Representative Assembly in July, delegates approved a new business item directing NEA to establish an information bank identifying school districts with teacher vacancies, to help RIFfed teachers find new jobs—to start over.

"Starting over—that's what it's like," says Colorado's Marianne Reichert. "At first when I got that RIF notice I wondered, 'Is there something wrong with me? Could I have done a better job?' Then I realized I was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time."

—Bill Fischer

RIFfed then rehired, South Bend, Indiana, teacher Jerry Ervin says layoffs have taken their toll on students and teachers.

Deer Park, Washington, school aide Helen Robbins was one of 12 aides whose jobs were eliminated last December. None have been rehired.

Tacoma, Washington, schools have been hard hit by state budget cuts, notes Tacoma Association of Classroom Teachers President Leon Horne.

Roland Moore

Hundreds of teachers, parents, and students march to the county office building in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, to protest layoff of some 500 teachers. The Prince George's County Educators Association has challenged the layoffs and is working in support of a November ballot measure to ease the county tax limitation.

A New Job, A New Life

Seattle Teacher Resettles in Texas

When Doug Compton received his second RIF notice in two years last spring, he'd already begun to think about another job.

"I felt like a ping-pong ball for the Seattle school administration," recalls Compton, an 11-year math and science teacher. "I think they used the layoffs as a way to move teachers anywhere they wanted."

Compton considered leaving teaching, but then his wife, Erlinda, saw a newspaper ad saying recruiters from the Dallas, Texas, school system would be in Seattle to conduct interviews.

Compton applied. He also followed up with a phone call to Dallas UniServ Representative Herb Cooke to learn more about the area.

On August 23, Compton greeted his students at the J. N. Ervin Elementary School in Dallas.

Though he hated to leave Seattle, where he'd lived for more than 10 years, the 34-year-old Compton believes he made the right career move. "I've set certain professional goals in education," he explains, "and I think in a growing system like Dallas I can reach them."

To his new local, the Classroom Teachers of Dallas, Compton brings years of experience as a Seattle Teachers Association faculty rep and area coordinator during two strikes.

"I'm not sure exactly how I will be involved in the Association," he says, "but I know I won't be just an observer."

Dale Bulla

RIFfed from the Seattle school system last spring, math and science teacher Doug Compton now teaches at J. N. Ervin Elementary in Dallas.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Public Supports ERA, Affirmative Action

The U.S. public is buying neither the rhetoric nor the philosophy of the New Right and the Moral Majority. And voters will not swing to the right on November 2, according to the Lou Harris survey conducted July 9-14. Harris reports that:

- By 69 to 21 percent, the public supports "federal laws requiring affirmative action programs for women and minorities in employment. . . ."
- A 59 to 37 percent majority favors passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, despite the recent failure to win ratification before the June 30 deadline.
- A 62 to 31 percent majority opposes "a constitutional amendment to ban legalized abortion."
- By 70 to 24 percent, a majority favors "keeping Social Security benefits as they are now, even if it means having to raise Social Security taxes."

These and other Harris findings cast doubt on conservative claims that the nation is moving to the right in the 1980's. New Right voices, however vociferous, apparently have not captured the public's mind—or heart.

Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future

by Eleanor Holmes Norton

In the second year of the Reagan Administration, in the third decade since the civil rights movement gathered momentum, a distinguished veteran of that movement analyzes our nation's progress toward becoming a humane society.

An Administration that opposes the expansion of equal rights on every level holds power today in this country. What does this tell us about the America we have created and the America of which we dream?

Twenty years ago this great country still lived with undiluted racism. Sexism, though pervasive, was not even on the list of recognized national grievances. Since then, what exactly have we achieved? What threatens our achievement, and what remains to be done?

We had injustice and inequality on the run in the 1960's and 1970's. No generation before or since has come to consciousness on the crest of so many mighty causes. We felt chosen, we were sure we knew what to do.

The 1980's present no illusion of sure direction. Shades of gray have replaced the solid blacks and whites of the 1960's.

Yet I do not believe the American people are committed ultraconservatives who were waiting all along for Ronald Reagan to come and lead them backward into the past. I believe we've created, for the first time, a new majority for equality out of the events and the raised consciousness of the past 20 years.

We are a nation on a search for new ideas and values to replace the old order that was swept away in the 60's and 70's. Ronald Reagan notwithstanding, Americans have embraced the values of the civil rights amendments to the Constitution of the 1860's, the values of the great civil rights enactments of the 1960's.

But we need a Congress—and we certainly need a President—to lead our nation up the road that our own best instincts and ideals have marked out.

And what is the place of those who have worked for social justice and equality? An almost unbroken string of successes in the dizzying 60's hardly prepared us for the more sobering 70's and the struggling 80's.

Somehow, in a much more hostile political climate than we found when we began these reforms, we must now complete them. The change forced by the quest of women for their rights, of Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Indians for their freedom, and of other groups for their full equality is irreversible. A single Administration in Washington, one session of the Congress cannot end it.

When we are discouraged, we who are the descendents of Susan B. Anthony and Walter Reuther and Martin Luther King, Jr., need to ask ourselves, Do the great human justice movements depend upon a social climate that pampers their slogans and glorifies their causes? Have we no reply to those who believe that our country cannot afford equity and justice?

Surely we can answer their doubt—with answers for today, not nostalgia for yesterday's movements. And today's answers do not include retreat from the great social goals that ennobled the nation's ideals and practices during the past generation.

These are days for the renewal of our determination. These are days, too, for recommitment to the unity of our purpose. These are days when nothing must divide us, when our diverse concerns must be the hallmark of our strength, not a hint of any weakness.

Without the highs and the lows of the 60's and 70's, without the dramatic rhetoric, without the charismatic leaders and the mass approval—with only the nation's best ideals, a fresh and unscarred sense of the possible, an often lonely sense of mission—with these and not much more, we must somehow finish what we have begun.

Eleanor Holmes Norton is a professor of law at the Georgetown Law Center, Washington, D.C.

Joe Di Dio

Addressing the 1982 NEA Representative Assembly, Eleanor Holmes Norton, former head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, analyzes prospects for human rights.

WASHINGTON WATCH

Several important pieces of NEA-backed legislation passed congressional muster over the summer, while others remain for possible action this month—or during a post-election session.

- NEA's bid for passage of a new **American Defense Education Act** is picking up steam. The bill is designed to bolster U.S. military and economic strength through federal funds for improving science and math teaching. Hearings are slated this fall. Sponsors are Rep. Carl Perkins (D.-Ky.), Rep. Tim Wirth (D.-Colo.), and Sen. Gary Hart (D.-Colo.).

Sen. Hart

Rep. Perkins

Rep. Wirth

- Despite White House pressure for more cuts, Congress approved a **fiscal 1983 budget** of $26 billion for education and social services, thanks in part to NEA efforts. Though less than NEA's funding goal, this budget was still almost $400 million more than last year's level. And in a major coup, Congress exempted education from the budget reconciliation process, preventing any further trimming.
- NEA was the only education organization to testify against attempts to dilute **child labor protection.** The Reagan Administration had proposed increasing the number of hours that 14- and 15-year-olds can work and allowing teenagers to be paid less than the minimum wage. NEA characterized the proposal as "outlandish at a time when more than 10 million adults are unemployed."
- The Reagan Administration's attempts to weaken regulations governing **Public Law 94-142,** the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, drew a very negative reception from Congress and heated words from special education teacher Georgia Gibson, a member of NEA's Board of Directors. Her testimony charged the Administration with "abandoning its responsibility to the nation's 40 million handicapped children and adults."
- NEA is fighting the Department of Education's proposed regulations setting new eligibility formulas for the **Pell grants,** which provide up to $1,800 a year to needy college undergraduates. Now students from a family of four earning up to $25,800 qualify. Proposed regulations would lower the ceiling to $18,500.
- ERA lives. . . . With NEA's support, the **Equal Rights Amendment** was reintroduced in Congress July 14 and has gathered 264 cosponsors.
- Testifying against the proposed constitutional amendment on **school prayer,** NEA President Willard McGuire told the Senate Judiciary Committee in August that passage would require the nation's public school teachers "to become spiritual guides, forced into leading their students in daily prayer."
- The Senate has cleared another proposed constitutional amendment, this one to require a **balanced federal budget,** but at press time it remained in the House Judiciary Committee. NEA opposes the measure, believing that education and other discretionary programs could be the first to be axed in the budget-balancing process.
- The Administration continues to fold federal aid programs into **block grants,** leaving administration largely to the states. Compensatory education for disadvantaged students is now lumped together with 28 other smaller categorical programs. However, Congress rejected Department of Education regulations governing the education block grant and ordered them rewritten.
- **Vocational and adult education** programs are also now targets for folding into a single block grant, with reduced funding. NEA is urging Congress to resist this move.
- Conferees are ironing out a **job training** bill to replace the expiring CETA program. Both House and Senate versions now emphasize public education, thanks to NEA pressure.

State Side

PACIFIC

The California Teachers Association has launched a new effort to boost state allocations to public schools and protect members' jobs.

Legislators already approved a budget freezing education spending for this school year at last year's level, but education advocates are hoping lawmakers will reexamine the budget package.

Among CTA's goals is passage of a one-time severance tax on oil, which would raise more than $400 million for public education. If new revenues are not forthcoming, CTA will press for legislation to allow financially strapped school districts to close down rather than provide bare-bones education.

"We are educators, not babysitters," stresses CTA President Marilyn Russell Bittle. "We urge the schools to close when the money for quality runs out."

Public education in California, K-14, remains tuition free, thanks at least in part to a grassroots lobbying blitz by the Community College Association (CCA). CCA is a statewide association of faculty from the 107 community college affiliates of the California Teachers Association/NEA.

The state legislature had moved to impose tuition at the community colleges as a way to make up a 1982-83 deficit of $2.4 billion resulting from property tax cuts under Proposition 13. CCA launched a statewide information campaign to make its 7,300 members aware of the enrollment—and job—losses that would result if the community colleges started charging tuition. Members responded by writing, phoning, and visiting their legislators. By midsummer the move to impose tuition had been reversed.

WEST

The Oklahoma Education Association has scored a major court victory that could mean millions of additional dollars a year for public education. In a suit filed last year, OEA contended—and the state supreme court has now agreed—that education has been shortchanged by the policies governing the administration of Oklahoma's School Lands Trust (more than 700,000 acres of public land, the proceeds from which go to public schools).

Under unrealistically low lease and loan rates set by the state legislature and implemented by the state land commission, the lands have been generating about $10 million a year. Those revenues could rise to more than $25 million annually under reform measures ordered by the supreme court.

A legal victory this summer by NEA-New Mexico will mean tax refunds for thousands of teachers. The state court of appeals upheld a lower court decision that the practice of deducting state income tax from that portion of a teacher's salary paid to the Education Retirement Fund is illegal. The court order opens the way for teachers to apply for refunds back to 1978 and in some cases 1975.

MIDWEST

There's a new audience these days for the school finance workshops run by the Illinois Education Association's research division. In an innovation piloted last year in three locals and now being adopted around the state, IEA affiliates invite their local school board members to attend the workshops.

Comments IEA Research Director Harry VanHoudnos, "Our sessions cover basic school finance, but I get the impression some of the board members who show up have never seen this type of information before. Quite often they seem to have been operating in the dark. If we can educate them, they'll make better decisions—and our members can't help but benefit."

The Michigan Education Association's "Preserve Public Education" campaign continues full steam ahead this fall. MEA has formed a coalition with the state superintendent of schools, the school boards association, and other groups to promote voter support for local property tax levies, which face tough sledding once again this year. Michigan's massive unemployment and already high property tax rates have made communities reluctant to vote to increase or renew school millages, even where districts are near bankruptcy.

Meanwhile, another MEA-backed coalition recently persuaded the legislature to raise state income taxes by 22 percent—almost unheard of in an election year—so as to stave off any further cuts in state aid to public schools and colleges in the immediate future.

MEA has set a nonnegotiable requirement for all state candidates seeking Association endorsement in the November elections: they must make a definite commitment to increase the state share of public education costs to at least 50 percent. State funding now accounts for only 35 percent of school costs, while local taxpayers are footing up to 65 percent.

SOUTHEAST

The United Faculty of Florida—bargaining agent for 5,500 faculty in the nine-campus Florida State University system and at four community colleges—officially affiliated with the Florida Teaching Profession-NEA on September 1. The UFF had been an American Federation of Teachers local but broke away over the issues of member services and structure. The UFF senate's unanimous approval of the new affiliation agreement this summer followed an April election in which 75 percent of UFF members voted for NEA representation.

The Arkansas Education Association is launching a major cooperative media project with NEA and other southern state Associations to help the public understand the uses and limitations of standardized tests.

Arkansas students' scores on Science Research Associates (SRA) tests continued to climb this year. But the reasons for the higher scores are not all educationally sound, AEA cautions. A significant number of Arkansas teachers report pressure from administrators to teach to the SRA test—to the point of changing curriculum and textbooks to conform to test questions, encouraging students who don't test well to stay home on test days, and tampering with actual scores.

MID-ATLANTIC

The biggest increase in state funding for Virginia schools in at least a decade is helping to boost teacher salaries by an average of 10 percent this year.

After a massive lobbying and public educational effort by the Virginia Education Association, the general assembly last spring went along with a gubernatorial suggestion and increased per-pupil expenditures by 20 percent.

What's more, the assembly specifically urged city and county funding authorities to hike teacher salaries by 10 percent this year and another 10 percent next year.

Virginia teachers ranked 34th among the states in average pay last year, at $17,090. Collective bargaining has been illegal for teachers and other public employees since a 1977 Virginia supreme court ruling.

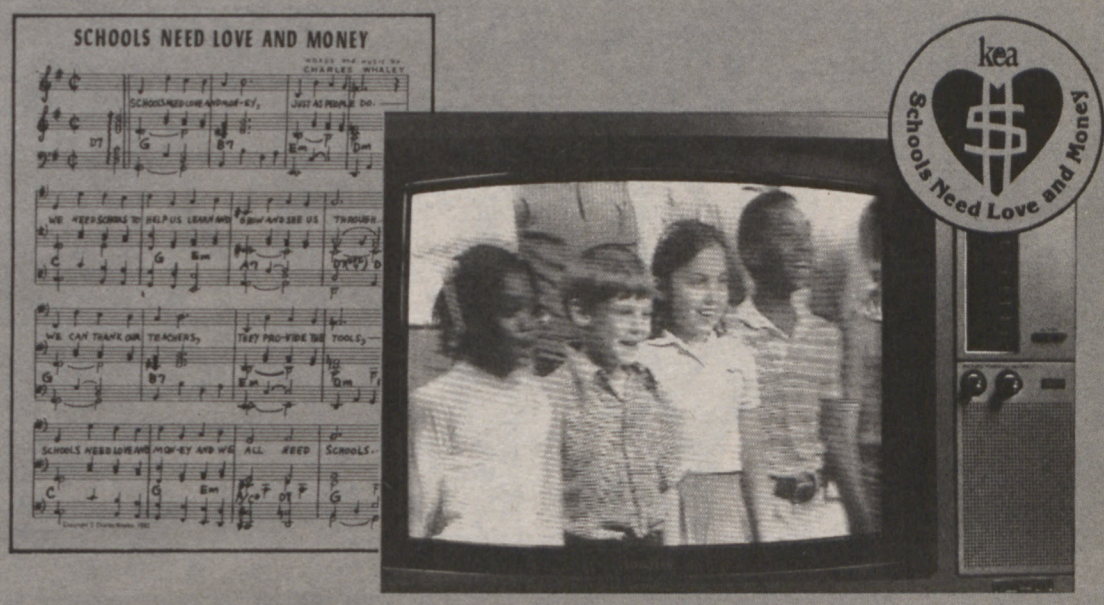
NORTHEAST

Thousands of angry New Jersey teachers and school support staff will march on the state capitol in Trenton soon under an enormous banner emblazoned "NJEA Rally for Justice Oct. 23" that now adorns the New Jersey Education Association headquarters.

NJEA members will be protesting the legislature's $83 million slash from the education budget, the state supreme court's decisions restricting the scope of public sector bargaining, the governor's reduction of a cost-of-living increase in public employee pensions, and his veto of a bill that would have strengthened due process rights.

IN KENTUCKY

Song Sparks KEA's New TV Ads



The Kentucky Education Association's first paid TV commercial features an original song written by a KEA staffer and sung by KEA member Patricia Weihe's fifth-grade chorus at Wright Elementary School in Shelbyville.

The Kentucky Education Association took to the airwaves last month with its first television commercial. The ad is part of a statewide public awareness campaign based on an original theme song, "Schools Need Love and Money."

"We want to tell Kentucky citizens that teachers really care about schools, children really care about schools, and so should they," says KEA President Jon Hendrikson.

KEA is spending nearly $34,000 to buy time on Kentucky and Ohio TV stations. The 30-second commercial ran during September as a back-to-school spot. It will air again in January and in April.

The theme will also be featured in public service radio spots and newspaper ads and will be used extensively during American Education Week, November 14-20.

KEA has suggested that local Associations build on the song by conducting their own community relations activities. These could include school competitions for the best performance of "Schools Need Love and Money" or contests for the poster, essay, or letter-to-the-editor best expressing the theme.

Local Look

OHIO, WEST VIRGINIA

When the presidents of the Ohio and West Virginia Education Associations held a joint news conference last spring to protest education budget cuts and tuition tax credit proposals, they started a tradition of partnership that has now spread to the local level.

Five Lawrence County, Ohio, locals joined forces this summer with West Virginia's Cabell County Education Association to produce back-to-school messages for the radio market area they all share. Other neighboring locals along the Ohio-West Virginia border are planning similar cooperative ventures.

OREGON

The Beaverton Education Association believes in giving its community the runaround, and the community loves it.

Begun as a one-time-only project, BEA's Fun Run has turned into an annual affair. Both teachers and students participate in 1,600-meter and 10,000-meter races, with prizes donated by area businesses. More than 500 runners competed last year.

BEA's Marsha Huff says the local emphasizes community relations "to show that teachers care about students in and out of the classroom."

MICHIGAN

Signs and posters reading "Together We Will," prominent 10 years ago in the suburban Detroit community of Ferndale, have been replaced with new ones saying "Together We Did."

The federal government ruled in 1970 that Ferndale was operating racially segregated elementary schools. After two years of school board delays, the Ferndale Education Association took the lead. Its political action committee—working with other community groups—succeeded in voting out the stagnant board.

A desegregation advisory committee composed of students, parents, teachers, and administrators then devised a plan, implemented last year, which involved the transfer of nearly 600 students, plus staff and materials. Good preparation and total community involvement produced a smooth transition to fully integrated elementary schools.

VERMONT

The 59-member St. Albans City Education Association has won the 1982 Dorros Peace Trophy as the NEA affiliate making the year's most significant contribution to global awareness and world peace.

During last spring's Peace and Friendship Week at the City Elementary School, NEA member Elise Caggige's fourth graders made 1,000 origami paper cranes which they sent to Hiroshima's August 6 Peace Day observance.

The St. Albans CEA has also prepared a step-by-step guide for local Association peace activities—part of the NEA resource materials on peace and the arms race now available through all UniServ staff.

INDIANA

Fort Wayne students who get stumped on homework assignments know where to go for help. The Fort Wayne Teachers Association sponsors "Homework Hotline" twice weekly on cable television. Teachers—armed with textbooks and workbooks, chalkboards and easels—respond to K-8 students' phone calls. "Most frequently, callers want help with multiplication and long division," says Shirley Harris, coordinator of the show. "We get a lot of questions on science and the parts of speech, too."

IN THE COWBOY STATE

Casper Local Stands Tall in the Saddle

Joe Di Dio

Among the 39 Wyoming delegates to this summer's NEA Representative Assembly were six past presidents and the current president of the Natrona County Classroom Teachers Education Association. From left are (standing) Ed Gunderson, Ed Brennan, Bob Leathers, and Bob Glasspoole; (seated) George Hebbert, Marge Schropfer, and Eloise Anderson. NCCTEA was one of two locals receiving NEA awards for contributing most to the Wyoming Education Association's past 10 years of sustained membership growth. The other was the Carbon County #1 Teachers Education Association.

"Conceive it, believe it, achieve it" is one of George Hebbert's favorite sayings—and one that aptly sums up the activism of Wyoming's Natrona County Classroom Teachers Education Association (NCCTEA).

Hebbert is the new president of the local, but like so many of his colleagues, he's been a member as long as he's been a teacher—23 years.

Solid membership makes this Association a standout in the Cowboy State. Membership is over 800—95 percent of the potential.

NCCTEA matches the expansive mood of the Casper area, an energy-dominated region that's doubled its population in the past 10 years.

The 5,300-square-mile Natrona County school district serves about 15,000 students in its 33 schools. Enrollments continue to grow. Some 70 new teachers were hired for this school year.

Hebbert says there's but one way to get new teachers signed up, and that's "to hustle—show the positive things the local's achieved over the years. Wishin' won't get it."

And there are many solid gains to point to. One is the Association's professional negotiations agreement with the school board, first hammered out in the mid-1960's. NCCTEA is still one of the few Wyoming locals with such an agreement. The state has no collective bargaining law.

Over the years, the local has strengthened the agreement—reducing class loads, trimming the work year by 10 days, and capturing higher salaries.

Though energy rich, the Casper area is not the state's wealthiest, so NCCTEA led a statewide drive in 1976 that dramatically increased state funding for teacher salaries.

The local enforces its agreement with a strong three-step grievance procedure. "We believe teachers are professionals," explains Hebbert, "not indentured servants, nor lapdogs for the administration. So we make sure members aren't intimidated, and that they're allowed academic freedom."

NCCTEA builds community support with a variety of projects. Throughout the year, members supply reading materials to hospitalized children. The public relations committee distributes valentines and May Day baskets to shut-ins and nursing home residents.

Internally, the local spends a large share of its $75 annual membership dues on training teachers in leadership skills. Wyoming Education Association President Norma Christensen calls leadership a key factor in NCCTEA's success.

"When members leave local office, they don't just fade away," she points out. "They continue to be active, and new members are constantly encouraged to get involved."

CALIFORNIA

When teachers in four South Orange County school districts need a plumber, a landscaper, a calligrapher, or even a karate expert, they hire their colleagues. The South Orange County Educators Association publishes an annual *Second Job Handbook*—a directory of members' skills and services, listed alphabetically from accounting to window washing.

COLORADO

Twice recently in Fort Collins, Poudre Education Association members have found a way to defeat their school board's attempts to impose merit pay.

The first time, Association activists quickly contacted all district teachers, wrote letters to the local newspaper, enlisted the support of community groups, and packed school board hearings. The board dropped the merit pay idea then, but brought it up again a few weeks later during early contract negotiations. Association leaders once more objected, and a majority of the board voted to shelve the plan.

"What shut the idea down," says local president Chloe Dinges, "was teacher unity. We convinced a majority of board members that merit pay would hurt teacher morale."

RHODE ISLAND

After taxpayers mandated a 10 percent school budget slash at a town meeting last February, the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School Committee fired the district's entire staff, including 64 teachers, three principals, and the superintendent.

The committee said it couldn't come up with any other plan on such short notice—programs and staff had already been reduced under eight straight years of budget cuts—so it simply pink-slipped everyone to meet the March 1 deadline for layoff notices.

"Only in R.I.: First no toilet tissue, now no teachers," commented a Providence newspaper columnist. "Next year, they're going to fire all the kids."

Under pressure from the local Association, NEA-Rhode Island, and the state department of education, the school committee finally petitioned for another town meeting. Citizens restored the 10 percent cut in July, allowing all school employees to be rehired.

Meet:

Winfred Vogt

Ann Kurzius

A Teacher Sold on 7th and 8th Graders

NEA-Vermont member Winifred Vogt, interviewed here by 'NEA Today' Editor Ann Kurzius, has been teaching language arts at Bellows Falls Middle School since 1971. She has served her local—the 118-member Windham Northeast Education Association—as president, vice-president, building representative, and member of numerous committees.

A New Jersey native and Wellesley College graduate, Vogt began teaching in 1950. She and her husband have two grown children.

You've always chosen to teach 7th and 8th graders. Why?
I *like* that age. They're old enough to be challenged with exciting literature, to do interesting writing, and to study the structure of their language, so the curriculum is varied and enjoyable.

They're such a mass of contradictions. They're affectionate, but they pull away from you. They're giggling one minute, sullen or in tears the next.

But when you can reach them, you can help. They're just a yeasty age—and they're fun. A 7th grader in September is still very much a child. By the end of 8th grade, he or she is almost an adult.

Bellows Falls is a very small town in rural Vermont. Does this setting make your job easier than it would be in an urban school?
Perhaps, but rural schools have their own set of problems. We don't have police patrolling our building, but we have vandalism, stealing, fighting, truancy, drugs, teenage pregnancies. Unemployment is high here. We have the kind of poverty where youngsters come to school without adequate winter clothing on mornings when it's 20 below.

A lot of my students would like to be professional athletes when they grow up. This is one of the unrealistic dreams I have to deal with. Poor readers speak confidently of "joining the army." I have to convince them the army wants people who can read.

Do you try to redirect their career aspirations?
I think my real goal in teaching is to get students to see that intellectual activity—reading, writing, questioning, pondering—is vital for *all* of life, whatever your job.

You teach homogeneous classes at high, average, and low ability levels. Do you have trouble switching gears between the different groups?
Yes, but I like all of them, and I get exasperated with all of them. I particularly enjoy the extremes. It's rewarding to work with a group of students who read well and who take a challenging book and get excited about it and cope with it. On the other hand, I was just as thrilled when a 15-year-old boy in one of my remedial sections wrote and mailed his first letter.

How do you teach remedial reading in eighth grade?
We have an excellent selection of materials that are attractive to junior high students but written on a second or third grade reading level. These students need to go back to very basic skills they have failed to acquire along the way.

We deliberately keep class sizes to a dozen or so for the students having problems—about half the size of the top sections. We also have a learning disabilities center—and Title I help, which is unfortunately being cut this fall under Reaganomics.

Today's children who have trouble reading have television and now Pac-Man, so print becomes "Why bother?" As a teacher you're sort of wooing them into books all the time. I read aloud everyday—books that are surefire in terms of interest but more difficult than the ones students can read themselves, so they will be constantly exposed to more sophisticated language and style.

What do you read aloud?
Robert Newton Peck's books about a character named Soup. Wilson Rawls' *Where the Red Fern Grows*. William Armstrong's *Sounder*. Sometimes I use a book as a "carrot." If the kids work very hard, then the last 10 minutes I read. If they haven't worked well, I don't have a chance to read, and they're very upset and usually will work harder the next day.

Do you read to your more advanced classes too?
Yes, I do. Sometimes I read the opening chapter, or just the first page, to arouse interest in a particular book or writer. Again I select books or writers that students dismiss as "too hard" or "boring" and whet their appetites with an exciting selection.

I insist on regular independent reading by all my students. They keep book logs in lieu of the traditional book report. They turn them in once a month, often with very personal comments ("This was a good book for kids about divorce, Mrs. Vogt. I know because my Mom and Dad are divorced.").

You were part of an "Earthwatch" research expedition in Italy last summer, helping a team of archeologists unearth Etruscan ruins. How did that come about?

Laurie Huse

I've always had an armchair interest in archeology, so when I was chosen (with 19 other southern Vermont teachers) for a federally funded global education project at the Experiment in International Living and had my choice of Earthwatch expeditions, I picked "Search for the Etruscans." (Earthwatch is a small organization that matches scientists who need help and summer volunteers who want a taste of field research.)

We earned six hours of graduate credit for the project, which included, in my case, four weekend workshops in global education at the Experiment, an intensive course in Italian, and then 16 days on the archeological survey in Cura, northwest of Rome.

Preparing for the trip was very demanding. Though I had studied Latin, French, and German in school, I hadn't tried to learn a new foreign language since 1949. I now feel more sympathy for my students who struggle to learn English grammar!

For the first time in years I wanted to spend 24 hours a day reading and studying. I think more teachers should have that kind of intellectual demand made of them.

What makes you a good teacher?
I think it's very difficult to set up an image of a "good teacher" and then live up to it every single day. That leads to burnout. I have to set for myself the goal of day to day doing some good teaching. And I also recognize that there are times when I *don't* teach something well.

What a lot of people don't realize is that most teachers are their own severest critics. At the end of the year I worry about those students I feel that I've failed in some way.

How many is that?
I don't know . . . some years it's five or six, maybe other years it's more. And maybe it's not as many as I think it is.

What I constantly worry about is the remark I make that in some way catches the child at the wrong moment. It may not even be a cruel remark, but it can just devastate them.

On the other hand, a teacher needs to be a human being for students. It's important for them to see that you're still growing, becoming, learning, even making mistakes. Maybe in this age of television, when we see so much plastic performing, it's even more vital that you be a vulnerable human being with your own combination of passions and interests.

What passions or interests do you share with your students?
I like to write myself, and I am very interested in *their* writing. I encourage them to write out of their own experience and to keep struggling with a piece of writing until they are satisfied with it.

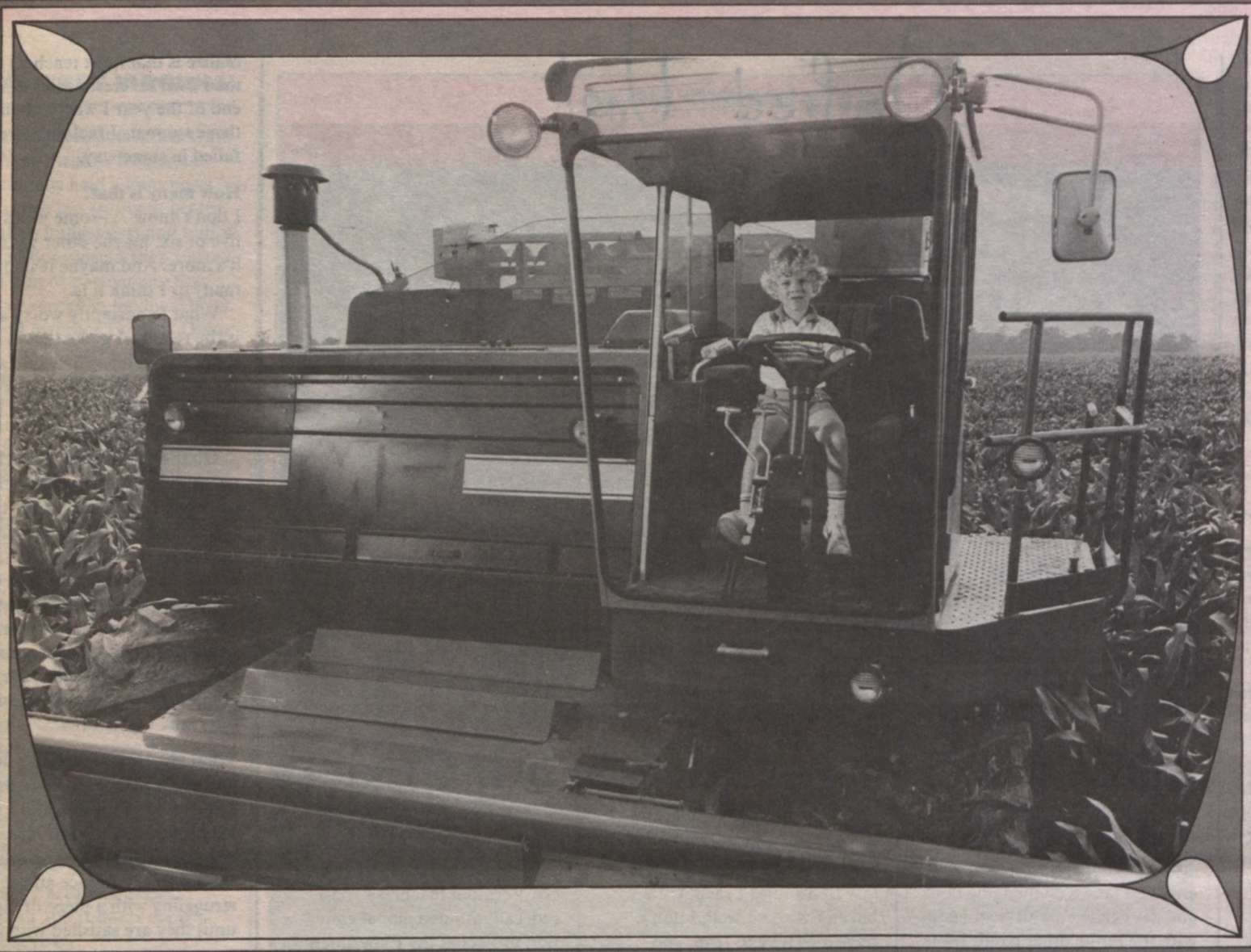
Do you ever feel isolated behind your classroom door?
Not at all. The camaraderie with my colleagues has meant a tremendous amount to me. We do have a duty-free lunch period. That's important at junior high level, because the days are so intense. The student energy level is so high it's exhausting.

I see those 25 minutes in the teachers' room as a sort of therapy session. Sometimes the level of laughter could almost be hysteria. We're good for each other, and there's a great deal of idea sharing and group support.

Do you ever have trouble getting up in the morning for another exhausting day? What keeps you going?
The satisfaction of getting through to a child—or the greater satisfaction of learning with a child or a group of children. Of course, I have my share of bad days when I get tired and discouraged. Very often it's a Thursday that you're really down in the dumps. You think, 'I ought to stay home tomorrow.' I've never done that, because I always thought if I stayed home I might not go back!

And it's always worked that the next day will be good. Some child will say, "Mrs. Vogt, I read that book you told me about" and look excited. And that's all it takes. We teachers are really made happy by very simple things.

NEA is on the air!



As students returned to school this fall, NEA launched a dramatic new television commercial.

The message? Public education is the one thing America has that's vital to everything America has.

Watch for NEA's message on these network shows in the weeks ahead:

Good Morning America (ABC)
October 1, 4, 13, 22

ABC News
October 7, 12, 21

Today (NBC)
October 5, 15, 20

NBC News
October 6, 8, 14, 19

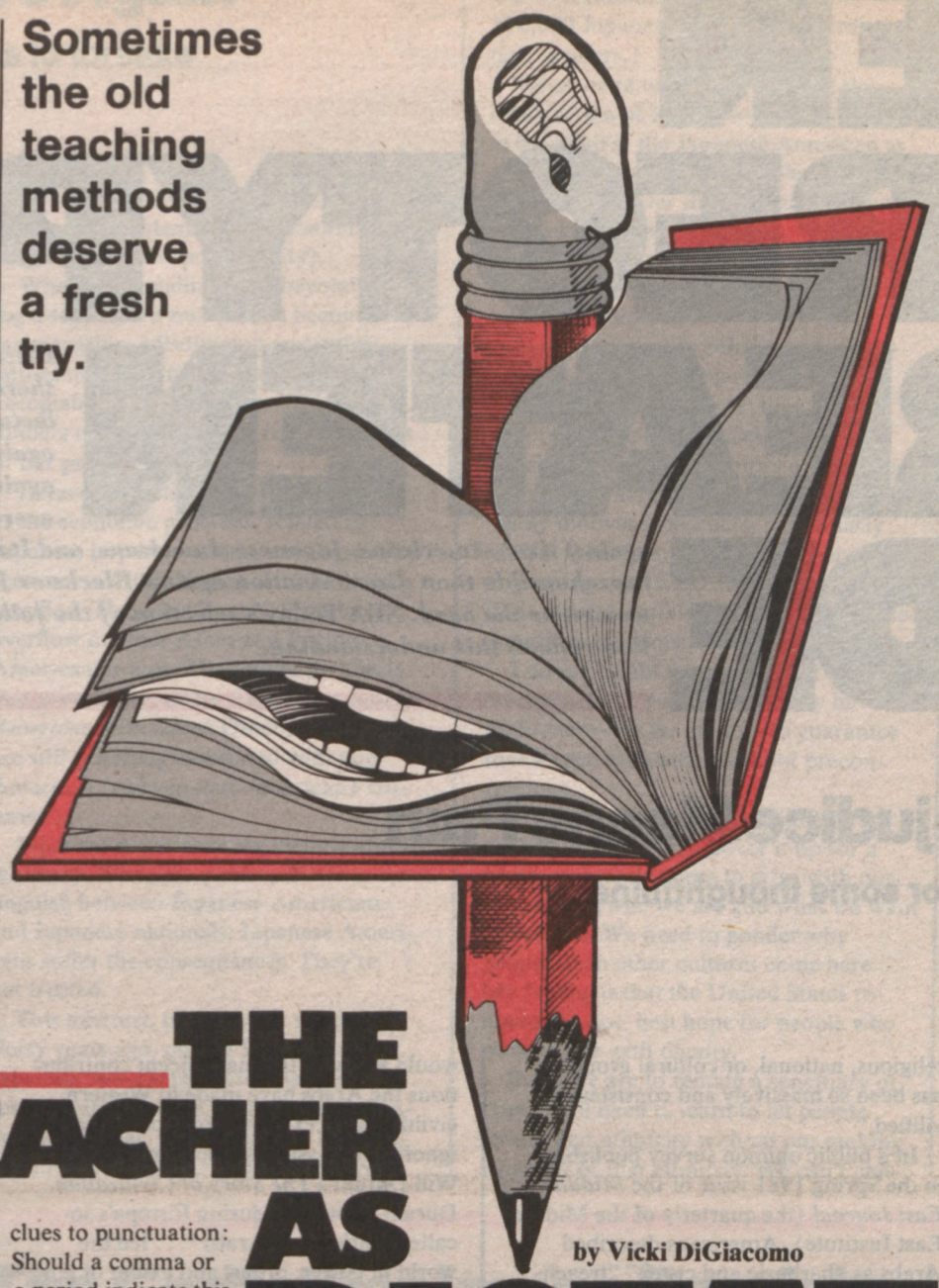
Cable News Network
October 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

nea

A strong America needs strong public schools.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Sometimes the old teaching methods deserve a fresh try.



THE TEACHER AS DICTATOR

by Vicki DiGiacomo

When dealing with behavioral problems, educators understand well the value of copying. Students need—or so the fashionable phrasing tells us—worthy role models. Unfortunately, teachers often abandon this insight when academic rather than behavioral difficulties are the issue.

My experience suggests that in trying to improve students' writing skills, all teachers could benefit from providing students with good prose models—the linguistic equivalents of role models—to copy. Imitation works. Students who copy good writing become improved writers. Thus a simple exercise—dictation—pays surprising dividends.

Dictation is an easy, underrated exercise, with several benefits for students and even a few for the teacher. The process itself is almost laughably simple.

In my language arts classes, three times a week, I dictate a passage (usually chosen for its stylistic grace or its relevance, or both) of about 150 words to my tenth graders. They try to copy exactly what I say.

They next try to correctly punctuate, spell, and capitalize what they have written. Then they refer to their textbooks or the chalkboard for the correct version of the passage and, using standard proofreading marks, make corrections on their own papers.

Finally, they draw a chart at the bottom of the paper and tally their errors in four categories: word omissions or additions, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

That's all there is to it. The whole process takes only about 10 minutes. But the benefits are long-lasting.

The most immediate improvement is in students' listening skills. Careful attention is vital to getting the passage copied word-for-word, so students learn right away to tune in and strain to hear every word. I can't understand why even students who will daydream through entire lectures will hang on every syllable of a dictation, but they do. One boy in my class used to get violently angry if anyone prevented him from hearing a word.

"Shut up!" he once hissed at a boy who was repeating my words softly to himself. "I can't hear with your mouth flappin'!"

Another benefit is that in taking dictation, students are actually putting a logically structured sequence of sentences on paper. Although we teachers may take sentence and paragraph construction for granted, most students do not. In fact, many freeze at the prospect of composing several paragraphs. And those with severe writing problems often feel that they are being asked to use a foreign language when the teacher requests complete sentences.

Dictation drills work against these paralyzing reactions. Students acquire a feeling for the physical form of sentences and paragraphs, without having to worry about composing them just yet. Composition can then be ushered in gradually and naturally. The copying exercises generate confidence.

Perhaps the most important benefit of dictation is that it introduces students to the kinship between the oral and the written word. For instance, with only the ear as a guide, students must listen for clues to punctuation: Should a comma or a period indicate this pause? Is someone speaking here? Is a new paragraph needed?

My first sign of success with dictation occurred when one of my sophomores told me, "We had to do quotations on the state assessment test, and I knew where to put the marks because we had used them so many times in dictation."

Students like this one begin to understand, as they have not been able to do with drill practice, that punctuation is more than ornamentation, that it is a written substitute for a speaker's pauses and inflections. They begin to relate those crazy little marks to their functions and to see why it is important to use them correctly.

In this close observation of language, students also notice more about word choice. They cannot ignore unfamiliar words. Often, while correcting a paper, a student will ask me for a definition of a new word. This gives me a fairly painless way to introduce vocabulary words.

My classes, I have found, also pay close attention to spelling—and not only to the spelling of so-called "hard words." A particularly satisfying moment for me came when a student correcting his dictation noticed that *a lot* is written as two words.

"Oh, boy," he said, "I've been spelling that wrong for a long time!"

"Me, too," added several others.

Never mind that I had mentioned this problem again and again and had circled it in compositions. When the students saw the proper spelling in dictation, they finally got the message.

When students work closely with short, carefully written passages, they also see something that we teachers may be uneasy with and often hesitate to tell students: sometimes the form that writing takes is arbitrary, and rules cannot pin it down with exactness.

A class of mine discovered after one dictation that most of them had broken a passage into paragraphs different from the author's. When they mentioned this, I examined the passage.

"I like your way better," I told them. "Yours is more logical to me."

Their mouths opened in astonishment that anyone would declare The Book less than perfect. But they saw an excellent example of an important concept: Writing has few right answers, only better answers. Their own writing practice doesn't seem so hopeless when they realize that even the best writers are subject to criticism.

Unexpectedly, dictation polished an important skill of mine, too. I learned to speak more slowly and distinctly and to read with expression so as to clearly drop the signals for punctuation. My oral communication skills improved steadily as I worked on strengthening my students' abilities.

Dictation most obviously improves students' listening and writing habits, but it is useful far beyond the language arts. Regardless of their subject matter, teachers can easily adapt this exercise to their particular needs and goals.

The possibilities are almost limitless. A science teacher might dictate a passage detailing a process that students have had trouble understanding. A typing teacher might use a paragraph reviewing how to clean a typewriter. A math teacher could dictate mathematical definitions or steps in problem solving. Teachers can thus review and reinforce the basics of their own discipline while improving their students' most fundamental skills.

Teachers will also find that dictation, besides being simple and easy to modify, can be exceptionally easy to evaluate.

My classes, for example, prefer to evaluate themselves. This method is less threatening to them than teacher evaluation would be. They knew that their mistakes do not determine their grade, so they are honest in finding them. They also can see that finding mistakes is for their own benefit, not just to give the teacher a score to write in the gradebook.

Correcting their own errors lets students compete against their own prior performances. They therefore give more attention to chronic mistakes and strive to avoid them. I have seen many students slap their foreheads and say something like, "Oh, not that again! I was so sure I did it right this time!" I know that a student who says this is trying hard to overcome the problem, not just marking up a paper.

The dictation method of teaching writing is old. Most teachers long ago gave it up in favor of more exciting approaches. The results, however, prove that the method is nowhere near obsolete. The skills it develops—better listening, closer attention to words, more coherent writing—are more in demand than ever.

Perhaps most importantly, students genuinely like taking dictation. If you give this technique a try, be prepared to hear some protests from your students when you finish dictating a piece. After all, this exercise may provide the only success with the written word that some of them have ever had.

Vicki DiGiacomo teaches language arts at Osceola High School in Kissimmee, Florida.

NEA Professional Library Offers Book on Writing

Composition: A Media Approach, by Frederick B. Tuttle, Jr., explores the various ways of helping students develop their composition abilities through visually oriented activities. 96 pp. Stock no. 1499-5-0F. $6.50. To order, write to NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

WHEN STEREOTYPES THREATEN PRIDE

Discrimination. ***On this issue, there is no political or intellectual halfway house. To be against discrimination is to be against it whenever and wherever it occurs. Discrimination against Arab Americans, Japanese Americans, and Italian Americans is no less reprehensible than discrimination against Blacks or Jews, Hispanics or Poles, women or the aged.*** **NEA Today's** ***selection of the following articles for publication reflects this understanding.***

For Children, Prejudice Means Pain

A Lebanese American pleads for some thoughtfulness. Even a little would help.

by James J. Zogby

Each Halloween, at my children's school, the students stage a parade, proudly displaying their costumes to friends and teachers. Two years ago on this festive occasion, eight of the students dressed as "Arabs." Their accessories included big noses, guns, knives, oil cans, and moneybags.

When, a short time later, the school held an ethnic festival, my son Joey and daughter Liz hesitated to wear their ethnic garb. Confusion and perhaps fear made them resist any display of pride. What for other students was the joy of ethnicity had become for my Arab-American children the pain of ethnicity.

Adjustment to the tensions of pluralism is a difficult process—particularly for children. I remember these tensions vividly. As a child, I was taunted—sometimes in jest, sometimes not. "Camel jockey," "desert nigger," "greasy Leb"—these were standard fare. But I survived, as did my Arab-American peers. We resolved the inner tension between the pressure to conform and the desire to retain what was uniquely ours.

Today children of Arab backgrounds may not be able to resolve this tension. We are living in a new era. The mockery that Arab-American children undergo is no longer in jest, and its source is no longer primarily their peer group.

Our culture—U.S. culture—feeds children a steady diet of not-so-subtle anti-Arab racism. Despite the pluralism of the Arab world—a world that stretches from Morocco in the west to Iraq in the east, embracing Christians, Muslims, and Jews—the condemnations are sweeping. To be Arab is not merely to be "different"—it is to be bad, vicious, less than human. "Greedy oil sheikhs," "crooked Arab merchants," and "Palestinian terrorists" offer little as models for emulation.

In the United States, to be an Arab is a liability. This society, which often proudly describes itself as "pluralistic," accepts Arabs only grudgingly. Columnist Nicholas von Hoffman has written that "no religious, national, or cultural group . . . has been so massively and consistently vilified."

In a public opinion survey published in the Spring 1981 issue of the *Middle East Journal* (the quarterly of the Middle East Institute), Americans described Arabs as "barbaric and cruel," "treacherous," "warlike," "rich," and as "mistreaters of women." Only a tiny minority of those surveyed held positive images of Arabs.

Americans tend to forget or ignore the magnificent culture and civilization that Arabic-speaking peoples created. Instead of seeing Arabs as people who have contributed to the development of human civilization—and to the *civilizing* of civilization—most insist upon viewing Arabs and Arab-Americans only through the distorted lens of negative stereotypes. (Americans also cling to misconceptions: Iran—just to clear up a common one—is not an Arab country.)

Historically, education has played an important role in countering stereotypes, erasing misconceptions, and thus easing the tensions of pluralism. Education affirms the value of cultural diversity and celebrates the beauty and richness of the many traditions making up the cultural mosaic that is America. The classroom remains the place where tolerance and appreciation of diversity can be encouraged.

But this potential has not been realized, at least with respect to the Arab world. If anything, what happens in many classrooms seems to reinforce negative stereotypes about Arabs.

Most textbook treatments of the Arab world equate Arabs with nomads and associate them with desert life. These texts ignore Arabic city life and consistently omit, for example, the fact that the Arab world of North Africa and Southwest Asia produces as much wheat as the United States. Minor matters? Perhaps. But they are indicative of a pattern of distortion.

Relying on U.S. textbooks, no student would know of the magnificent contributions the Arabs have made to Western civilization. Textbook producers evidently ignore such basic historical accounts as Will Durant's *The Story of Civilization*. Durant wrote that during Europe's so-called Dark Ages, Arabs ". . . led the world in power, order, and extent of government, in refinement of manners, in standards of living, in humane legislation and religious toleration, in literature, scholarship, science, medicine, and philosophy."

Publishers also tend to ignore or distort contemporary realities. In political history, for example, textbooks mention the Arab world only as the other half of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They ignore the fact that these 150 million human beings have a history of economic, political, cultural, and social development quite independent of that conflict. Similarly, the 2.5-million-member Arab-American community in this country exists, in textbooks, as one of the nation's invisible minorities.

Not surprisingly, Arab-Americans have been hesitant to express themselves, to put forth an accurate picture of their culture. As a result, in 1980, Arab Americans—concerned above all for their children—formed the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. It aims to let U.S. children and adults know who Arab Americans are, where they come from, what they have contributed to the world. The Committee strives to make known what should be obvious—that degrading stereotypes wound the pride and offend the dignity of Arabs.

Arab Americans are seeking what every other ethnic group in this country has demanded: they want their culture and their ethnicity understood and respected. For that, they need the help of America's teachers.

James Zogby is executive director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in Washington, D.C.

NEA Publications

Multiethnic Education, Education in the 80's. James A. Banks, editor. 192 pp. 1981. (3157-1-06 paper) $10.95. (3158-X-06 cloth) $14.95.

Roots of America. Developed by New Jersey Education Association and NEA. 192 pp. 1975. (1375-5-06) $5.95.

Understanding Intergroup Relations. Jean D. Grambs. 32 pp. 1973. (1029-9-16) $2. Color filmstrip of the same title, accompanied by leader's guide and cassette tape narration. 122 frames, 15 minutes. 1972. (1116-3-06) $24.50.

Order from NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06515.

Scapegoats Once Again

A Japanese American urges us to forsake fashionable escape routes.

by Ronald K. Ikejiri

As we in the United States become increasingly uncertain of our economic security and social stability, attacking the nearest perceived cause of our problems becomes an acceptable and fashionable way of venting our frustrations.

In a major city in Virginia, for example, a General Motors Corporation dealership proudly displays a billboard that reads "Get your JAP zapper here"—a crude attempt to elicit the "Buy American" emotion within us.

For Japanese Americans the racist term *Jap* is a fighting word—just as *nigger, dago, kike,* or *spick* are for other American groups. Certainly racist name-calling is not new, but it has generally been thought of, at least in the 1980's, as a schoolyard habit.

Yet, in a hardly innocent way, many politicians, journalists, and others who mold U.S. public opinion use name-calling to blur the real causes of our economic and social problems (e.g., inflation, unemployment, low productivity).

When name-calling goes beyond being a schoolyard nuisance, it becomes scapegoating. Misdirected and unfair anti-ethnic sentiments then become an acceptable part of our lives. This habit hinders our efforts to find the real causes of our problems.

In recent months, largely as a result of the economic problems related to Japanese imported goods, anti-Japanese sentiments within this country have intensified. These sentiments oftentimes overflow to other Asian and Pacific American groups. The reason for this is that even today, many Americans equate *American* with *white*. Other skin colors are still generally associated with non-American (or even anti-American) cultures.

Japanese Americans are victims of this tendency. When the public refuses to distinguish between Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans suffer the consequences. They're not trusted.

This mistrust, of course, is not new. Forty years ago, during World War II, Japanese Americans were interned in 10 concentration camps, many for the duration of the War. (On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, the effect of which was to legitimize the internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans in "relocation" centers.)

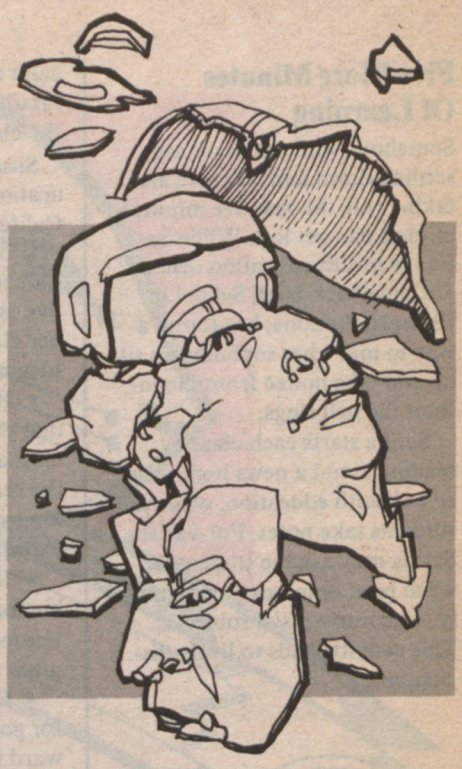
What we're witnessing today is the resurrection of the stereotype so popular in the 1940's: the Japanese American as sneaky, inscrutable, sly, subversive. The mass media foster this fraudulent image. And educational institutions, through their failure to present an accurate and balanced treatment of Japanese Americans, perpetuate it.

Many supposedly enlightened educational leaders still cling to a "positive" version of this stereotype; they label children of Japanese ancestry "clever." Teachers and administrators often expect Japanese-American students to be passive, highly motivated learners, particularly skillful in math and science, rather slow in language and literature. These expectations place a terrible burden on Japanese-American students.

I do not doubt the goodwill of our teachers. But I do think that they have to do more—as we all do—to guarantee that we see each other without preconceptions.

Maybe we ought to put a cloth over the Statue of Liberty, cover it up for a while, and really come to grips with ourselves, with who we are and what we want to become. We need to ponder why people from other cultures come here. My feeling is that the United States remains the last, best hope for people who want to live with dignity.

But if we are to remain a sanctuary of hope, we'll need to learn to let people retain their ethnicity without our making a parody of that ethnicity. We can't continue to think of people with a Japanese or any other ethnic background as one-dimensional.



We need to learn that ethnic identities, like personal identities, are dynamic rather than static. That's a lesson with the power to dissolve the stereotypes that demean so many of our citizens and bring pain to our children. It's also a lesson that any curriculum can accommodate.

Ronald Ikejiri is the Washington, D.C., representative for the Japanese American Citizens League.

The Godfather Image Persists

An Italian American calls for an end to media distortions.

by Vincent S. Romano

A recent research study has confirmed what Americans of Italian origin already know: negative stereotyping of Italian Americans pervades the U.S. media.

A team affiliated with Columbia and George Washington Universities studied prime-time television programs during the 1980-1981 season. Among the major findings:

- Negative portrayals of Italian Americans outnumber positive ones by two to one.
- Television portrays one out of six Italian-American characters as criminals.
- Viewers could conclude, judging from TV presentations, that most Italian Americans hold low-status jobs and are unable to speak English correctly.
- Italian Americans who are not portrayed as villains or criminals are generally pictured as lovable, laughable dimwits.
- Television fails to provide positive role models for Italian-American children.

Television is not the only culprit. Newspapers and magazines have portrayed Italian Americans negatively for years. As early as 1881, inflamatory newspaper articles led to the lynching of 11 Italians in New Orleans. Though not as blatant today, coverage of the Italian-American community is still often biased.

The print media continue to use words such as *Mafia* and *Cosa Nostra* as synonyms for organized crime. Despite studies showing that organized crime is not the province of any single racial, ethnic, or religious group, the popular misconception—the "Godfather" image—persists.

In 1980, a Pennsylvania Crime Commission study found that Italian-American involvement in organized crime is negligible. Only a year later, the National News Council, a prestigious media watchdog group, concluded that the press sustains and perpetuates the stereotype of Italian Americans as gangsters.

Even school textbooks are not free from stereotypes, omissions, and inaccuracies. They generally fail, for example, to mention that William Paca, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was Italian—and that explorer John Cabot was in fact Giovanni Caboto.

Equally destructive are textbook distortions and and inaccuracies. One eleventh grade social studies book treats organized crime as an Italian-American invention. The same book suggests that Italian Americans sympathized with the Axis powers in World War II. This obvious falsehood is an insult to the hundreds of thousands of men and women of Italian descent who loyally served in the U.S. armed forces during the War.

Teachers should be wary of such shoddy textbook materials. When they encounter text distortions, their responsibility is clear: they should alert both the school administration and the school board to the problem. And they should write to textbook manufacturers, informing them of inaccuracies and demanding corrections.

Americans of Italian heritage have recently intensified efforts of this kind—both individually and collectively (through such organizations as the Sons of Italy and the National Italian American Foundation). The Italian-American community is ready to provide research results and information to support its contentions. It aims to inform and sensitize non-Italians to the problems Italian Americans face.

There are 20 million Americans of Italian descent who are proud of their family-oriented values, their hard work, and their achievements. They are weary of being unfairly maligned. They want to be an equal part of the American mosaic, maintaining their cultural roots while participating fully and fairly in the economic and social fabric of American life. They want no more. They will accept no less.

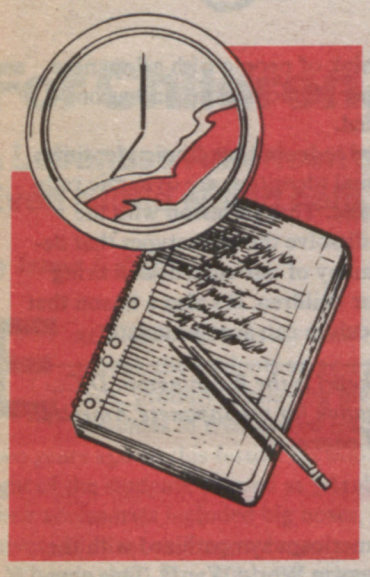
Vincent Romano is the editor of Justice, *the newspaper of the Committee for Social Justice, Order Sons of Italy in America; and deputy superintendent of schools, District 27, Queens, New York.*

IDEA EXCHANGE

Five More Minutes Of Learning

Somehow, while students are settling down and teachers are taking roll, the first five minutes of class can get lost. Willie Satina, a health education teacher at Camelback High School in Phoenix, Arizona, has found a way to make her sophomores sit up and take notice from the instant the bell rings.

Satina starts each class by reading aloud a news item related to health education, while the students take notes. For variety, Satina may ask the students to write brief opinions, anonymously, on controversial subjects. This activity leads to lively discussions.



When Satina first introduced this practice, protests and complaints abounded: "Wait!" "I can't write so fast!" "I don't have a pencil!" "I can't hear!" "Please start again!" All of these pleas became less common as the class got used to the new procedure. Gradually, students learned to take notes selectively and to concentrate on listening. They also learned to tell one another to be quiet, since Satina starts reading on time, no matter what.

While the students polish their notes, Satina takes roll, then collects the papers and puts them away in the class folder.

Satina says this technique cuts down on tardiness, since students lose points if they're not in class on time. Every few weeks, Satina passes back the students' papers for review and then gives the class a test on them.

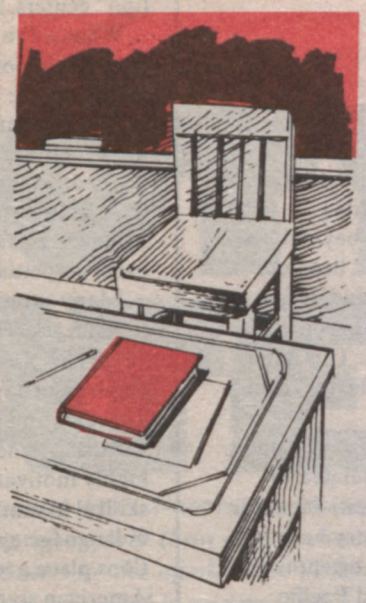
According to the students' evaluations of class activities, Satina reports, the dictation and opinion polls are very popular.

When You Need A Substitute

Every teacher occasionally requires a substitute, whether for a day or for several weeks. Often a teacher discovers that a particular substitute works especially well with the class and requests that person again. But teachers can't always get someone who is familiar with the students and the class routine.

Susan D. Keeffe, a special education teacher in El Cerrito, California, has developed a set of procedures to make the class's time with a substitute as productive as possible. They work with her classes—maybe there's a new idea here that will work for you.

- If you know ahead of time that you'll be absent, give the class advance notice. Tell them the reason for your absence, how long you'll be out, and what you expect to find on your return.
- If you have an aide, give him or her as much advance notice as you can; talk over the program for the time you'll be out.
- Give the class an incentive for good behavior. Offer a reward for a good report.
- Ask the substitute to write a note telling you how things went while you were out. This provides feedback you can pass on to your students, letting them know you are in control even when you are absent.
- Post the daily schedule on a large chart where everyone can see it. That way the substitute won't have to run to the plan book with every scheduling question.
- Post the monitors' jobs where everyone can see them. That way the substitute knows who is to do what, and the students know that he or she knows.
- Post the names of any aides or tutors you have and the times and days they work.
- Put the lesson plans, together with all the materials they require, on your desk or in some other obvious location.
- List in your plan book any kinds of pull-out programs that affect your class, with the times they meet and the names of the students who take part.
- Provide a seating chart in the plan book.
- Use bookmarks to mark the place the students have reached in math and reading books. If the class reads by group, write the names of the students who are studying each lesson on the marker for that lesson.
- Provide extra coloring sheets, workbook pages, and activities for fast workers.
- Keep the lesson plans simple. The substitute wants to know *fast* how to spend the time and where to find the materials —*not* to read a detailed explanation of your program.
- Don't plan any change in routine for the time you'll be out. The children will have to adjust to a different personality, and this is difficult enough. If the amount of change is manageable, coping with it can be an added learning experience for the class.
- Don't give the substitute your home phone number. If there is a problem, your aide or principal can handle it.



- Don't worry. Even if you do everything right, something may still go wrong. If you're sick, worrying will only make you sicker and keep you out of the classroom longer. Relax, get well, and come back refreshed, ready to pick up the pieces!

Book Swap

If your students are book owners, they can get some new reading material and at the same time learn firsthand about the benefits of recycling, says Pamela Klawitter of Mt. Nebo, West Virginia. Klawitter, a fifth and sixth grade teacher presently on leave, has helped her pupils exchange books they no longer use for a brand new supply, without spending a penny.

For the exchange, she would ask each child to bring in paperback books—and perhaps posters and children's magazines as well—in good condition. She allowed about a week for students to bring in their books. For each book that a child brought in, Klawitter issued a ticket good for any other paperback on the day of the exchange.

On exchange day, pupils would display the books attractively on large tables. They arranged the "stock" by topic for easier selection and stacked duplicates to save space. One pupil would be in charge of taking the tickets. Klawitter points out that limiting the number of children who may "shop" at one time will cut down on the confusion.

At the end of a successful exchange, everyone had something fresh to read—and, notes Klawitter, the classroom paperback library might benefit from some exchanges too.

We hope you'll find some good ideas, new to you, in the Idea Exchange, and we'd like you to give us your tried-and-true ideas in return. If you're using a classroom activity that you think other NEA members might like to know about, send a description to Idea Exchange, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

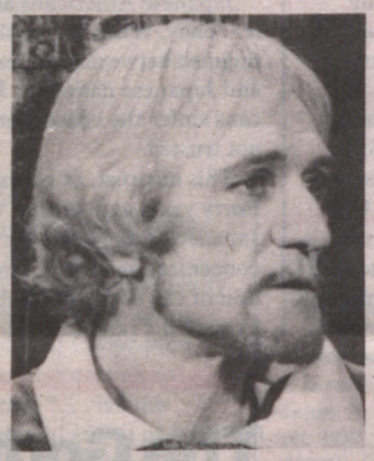
TV/RADIO TIPS

NEA RECOMMENDS...

NEA recommends the following broadcasts to members, students, and their families in the weeks ahead:

Discover: The World of Science *—syndicated, late September (check local listings for station and airtime)*—Peter Graves hosts this one-hour special that illustrates the growing influence of 'sports science,' the burgeoning plant and animal life in the Mount St. Helens crater, and other dramatic scientific developments.

Fight for Survival: The Cult of the Lion and **The Rhino Wars**—*syndicated, late September (check local listings for station and airtimes)*—Two-part series on the battle to save two endangered species in Kenya.



Richard Harris stars as King Arthur in the HBO Theater presentation of "Camelot."

Camelot—*Home Box Office, Sunday, September 26, 8-10:30 p.m. ET (repeated Wednesday, September 29, and Sunday, October 3).* Restaged version of the 1960 Lerner & Loewe Broadway hit. Prime Time School Television has prepared an eight-page teachers' guide covering Arthurian legend, the musical itself, and how a theatrical event is adapted for television. Copies have been mailed to all UniServ staff and every state Association.

The Zertigo Diamond Mystery *—CBS-TV, Tuesday, September 28, 4:30-5:30 p.m. ET.* "CBS Children's Mystery Theater" presentation stars Adam Rich as a blind 12-year-old who helps solve the theft of the world's largest diamond.

The Law Works—*syndicated during September and October (check local listings for station and airtimes)*—Five half-hour programs on juvenile justice and the rights of minors.

Voyagers—*NBC-TV, Sunday, October 3, 7-8 p.m. ET.* New fantasy-adventure series created in association with Scholastic Productions. 'Time cop' Phineas Bogg monitors the course of history with his chronometer.

Great Performances—*PBS, Monday evenings (check local listings for airtimes)*—The longest-running fine arts series in TV history presents one of its finest seasons to mark its 10th anniversary. *October 4:* "Live from Lincoln Center"—George Balanchine celebrates Igor Stravinsky's 100th birthday. *October 11:* an adaptation of Mark Twain's last novel, *The Mysterious Stranger. October 18:* "The Shakespeare Plays" presents *King Lear. October 25 through November 29:* lavish six-part adaptation of Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma.*

Help Wanted—*CBS-TV, Tuesday, October 12, 4:30-5:30 p.m. ET.* "CBS Afternoon Playhouse" dramatizes the problems of a laid-off auto worker's family.

Inside Story: Nuclear War, the Incurable Disease—*PBS, Wednesday, October 13, 10-11 p.m. ET.* Three American physicians join three Soviet physicians and professors in a panel discussion of the medical consequences of nuclear war.

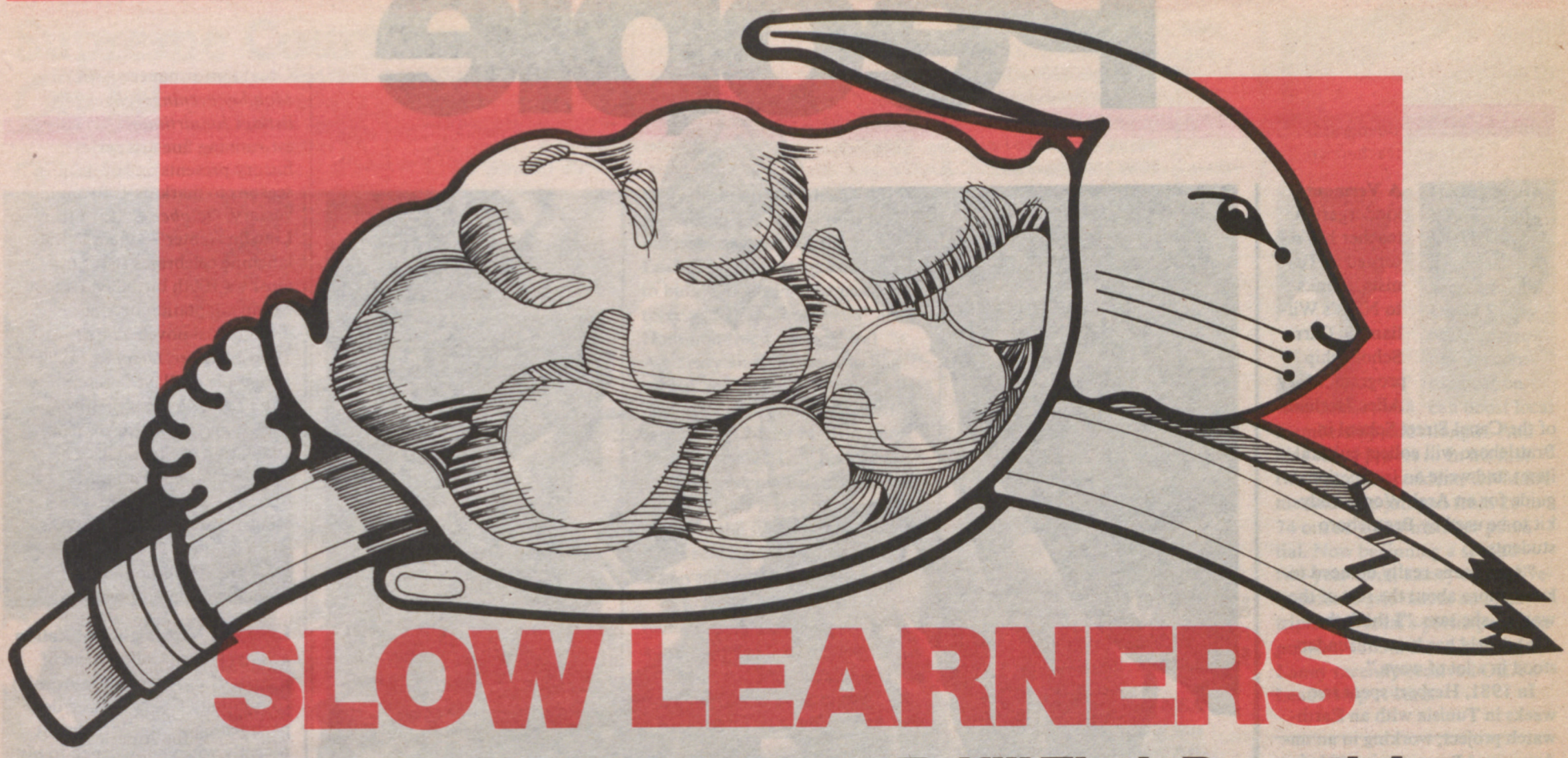
The Rainmaker—*Home Box Office, Sunday, October 24, 8-10 p.m. ET.* Theatrical production of the American romantic classic by N. Richard Nash, set in the West in 1922. Descending on the Curry family in a time of severe drought, a con artist promising to make rain ignites the smoldering conflicts within the family.

The Magic of Dance—*PBS, Monday, October 25, 9-10 p.m. ET.* First of a six-part series in which Dame Margot Fonteyn takes a comprehensive look at the changing scene in dance.

Robbers, Rooftops & Witches—*CBS-TV, Tuesday, October 26, 4:30-5:30 p.m. ET.* "CBS Library" presentation stars Tom Aldredge as Washington Irving, who reviews the genesis and form of the American short story. O. Henry's "The Chaparral Prince," Borden Deal's "Antaeus," and Ray Bradbury's "Invisible Boy" are dramatized.

October 12 "CBS Afternoon Playhouse" presentation, "Help Wanted," features Melanie Gaffin as Jessy and K. C. Martel as Max Welsh.

IN THE CLASSROOM



SLOW LEARNERS

How Teachers Can Help Them Fulfill Their Potential

by Suzanne G. Busch and Barbara K. Talent

Educators have responded well, in some cases remarkably so, to the mandates of P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. In response to this legislation, researchers moved into action, teachers devised new curriculums, schools revamped priorities. The progress to date is impressive.

The picture, though, is not entirely bright. This march forward has left behind one group—the so-called "slow learners." To *their* handicap, many administrators and teachers no longer give formal recognition.

But the problem remains. Slow learners move sluggishly through new material. Often comfortable with rote memorization, they typically stumble when the subject matter becomes abstract. Both their reading comprehension and their ability to understand oral instructions tend to lag behind those of their peers.

Slow learners' difficulties may be recognized at different points in their school careers. Teachers may notice the problems as early as kindergarten when they describe these children as "immature" or recommend that they repeat the year.

On the other hand, some slow learners may acquire enough of the mechanical skills taught in the early grades to make adequate progress then, only to flounder in third or fourth grade when curriculum becomes more complex and reasoning skills more important.

Psychological testing of slow learners reveals a cognitive profile different from that of learning disabled, behavior disordered, or mentally retarded children. The slow learners' cognitive abilities are evenly developed and only slightly below average.

These children can learn—but they do so more slowly than others and require more structure, repetition, and review. How productive slow learners are in school usually depends in large part on how successful they feel.

For this reason, parents and teachers need to take special care to develop realistic expectations. Measured against standards appropriate for "average" learners, the slow student can easily become frustrated, discouraged, and depressed. Parents and teachers will then find that they have a much more stubborn and complex problem to deal with.

What then are the ways to deal effectively with slow learners? The following suggestions have helped such children become productive learners. Teachers have successfully used them in a regular classroom setting.

- It is crucial that slow learners, regardless of their formal grade placement, be given material appropriate to their current level of functioning. Teachers may have to ask colleagues or the school librarian for help in locating some high interest, low vocabulary books.
- Slow learners should be allowed to work at their own pace. To a greater degree than most other students, they need to master and "overlearn" basic concepts and skills before they tackle more advanced work. These students will also adapt more easily to new material if teachers break it down into small, less overwhelming units.

Very often, slow learners will be willing to attempt a small amount of new or difficult material, but an entire page of math problems or a long list of new spelling words will almost always discourage these children.

- Slow learners understand directions more easily when teachers provide extra examples and demonstrations. Before working independently with material the teacher has just presented, slow learners need a chance to practice a few items so that the teacher can check their grasp of the material. This approach prevents children from practicing their mistakes.
- Slow learners need a sense of order. A highly structured learning environment often helps them feel more relaxed and confident. Specifically, teachers can help by making the school day as consistent and predictable as possible. They may, for example, show children how to keep an assignment notebook or schedule chart. ("Mondays and Wednesdays we have art. Tuesdays and Thursdays we go outside for gym.")
- The appropriate use of praise can be extremely effective with slow learners (as with most other students). Unfortunately these children are frequently the ones teachers neglect to praise, since their performance is rarely noteworthy when compared to that of their classmates. Honest, informative praise often boosts their self-esteem.

Teachers should try to be especially prompt to praise instances of behavior they would like to see more often. Focusing on the child's effort ("trying hard" or "sticking with it") is more effective than praising the final product ("you got them all right!"). Liberally praising slow learners' efforts helps them avoid the frustration that often results when they have to deal with difficult material.

- Slow learners are more likely to maintain—or develop—a positive self-image if they have many opportunities to demonstrate what they can do well. Teachers may have to do some investigating to discover a slow learner's interests and strengths. They might also consider asking these students to participate in nonacademic classroom activities in which they can be both successful and productive (e.g., putting up a display on a bulletin board, organizing a bookshelf, taking attendance). If a slow learner reads with any degree of fluency and expression, sending that student to the kindergarten room twice a week to read simple picture books to the children there may be an excellent confidence-boosting activity.

No matter how successfully teachers work with slow learners, they will likely still have trouble with the issue of grading. This is a difficult problem with no easy answers.

Grading the work of a slow learner solely by comparison with the work of "average" children will undoubtedly result in the slow child's receiving disappointingly low grades. On the other hand, evaluating this student on effort alone may cause parents to develop an inflated notion of their child's abilities.

School policy often complicates this problem. Many schools have precise criteria for earning specific grades and allow no deviations.

Given this thorny issue, teachers who have a slow learner in their classroom will have to draw on their own creativity to find a suitable grading system. Brainstorming with the principal, other teachers, and parents may be helpful. Regardless of the specific system decided upon, it is important both to let the child know that someone appreciates his or her effort and to provide honest feedback to the parents.

Finally, teachers who deal with slow learners need to keep in mind the long-range goal—which, incidentally, is no different than that for the "average" youngster. Education must prepare children to become productive members of society. Slowness, like other learning liabilities, need not translate into a lifelong disability. Teachers can help guarantee that it does not.

Dr. Busch and Dr. Talent are instructors of Psychology in Pediatrics at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri. They are also, respectively, educational consultant and assistant director, St. Louis Children's Hospital.

People

A Vermont kindergarten teacher has returned to Tunisia, thanks to NEA's William G. Carr Scholarship program. **Mary Alice Herbert** of the Canal Street School in Brattleboro will collect cultural items and write an instructional guide for an Arab World study kit to be used by Brattleboro students.

"Americans really do need to know more about the rest of the world," she says. "I think the Arab world has been misunderstood in a lot of ways."

In 1981, Herbert spent two weeks in Tunisia with an Earthwatch project, working in an underground Roman ruin. Aided by her fluent French, she also found time to talk with Tunisian educators, making contacts for her current project.

Trish Lewis

First grade teacher Selby Mills and five of her colleagues have created a nature trail on the grounds of Galaxy Elementary in Boynton Beach, Florida. The teachers—all members of the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association—got a $2,500 grant from the state department of education to preserve a peaceful 1/8-mile-long strip of "sand pine scrub" in the shadow of Interstate 95.

The committee also made a filmstrip-tape to show visitors—children and adults alike—before they go out on the "Meteor Trail." A teachers' guide suggests follow-up lessons.

Along the trail, a powwow area with tree stumps for seats has become a popular open-air classroom where students can observe unspoiled nature.

CTA Professor

Longtime NEA higher education activist **Henry Cobos,** head of the East Los Angeles (California) Community College music department, got "star" treatment recently when he returned to his hometown of El Paso, Texas, to perform as a piano soloist with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra at the city's new concert hall.

He was honored with a certificate of appreciation from the mayor and city council and an award from the Rotary Club—as well as calls and letters from several of his former teachers.

Cobos is president of the Los Angeles College chapter of the California Teachers Association's Community College Association.

Once it was 'Mr. Mayor.' Now it's just plain Bob—**Bob Emery,** a middle school librarian and NEA activist who served 18 months as the first mayor of Poway, California. Emery guided the transition of Poway from an unincorporated San Diego County area of 37 square miles into a city of 37,000 people. "It was a great chance to put some of my own ideas about local government into action," he says.

School really *is* a zoo at Hudson (Ohio) Junior High—thanks to earth science teacher **Gladys Gill.** Over the years, she has put together a small collection of fascinating animals, including a 7-foot boa constrictor, a pair of skunks, a ferret, white rats, parrots, piranhas, and tarantulas.

"It's interesting to watch students who don't relate well to adults develop a relationship with animals," says Gill.

All the animals have names except those used as food (mice for the snakes, and goldfish for the piranhas).

Youngsters visit the "zoo room" at lunch or after school to learn how to care for the menagerie. With parental permission, Gill will allow a student to take an animal home for a "weekend adoption."

Four years after they were fired for criticizing the local school board, Hico, Texas, teachers **Veriena Braune** and **Joyce Wells** have been reinstated and awarded $204,000 in back pay and damages. Last May, an Austin federal court jury found their constitutional rights to free speech and due process had been violated. The jury also fined the Hico superintendent $6,000, the principal $5,000, and each of the seven board members $1,000. Braune and Wells were backed by the Texas State Teachers Association and NEA through the Kate Frank/DuShane Unified Legal Services Program.

Richard J. Baker

Sue Klemens

One teacher who gets paid to sing the blues is **Gaye Todd-Adegbalola,** Virginia's 1982 Teacher of the Year. She rekindled a lifelong interest in music five years ago when her furnace failed and she needed money. She taught herself to play the guitar and then auditioned successfully at a local club.

Team leader for gifted and talented children at Walker Grant Middle School in Fredericksburg, Todd-Adegbalola also sings at festivals and other events in her spare time. "I don't have a cultured voice," she says, "but I have one that's fitting for the blues—rough around the edges!"

George Badner

Art teacher John Kosek shares his childhood interest in the stars with astronomy club members at Riverside High School in Taylor, Pennsylvania.

Five years ago, Kosek got federal funding to build an observatory on the school grounds, complete with a 14-inch-diameter telescope. Twice the Pennsylvania State Education Association has presented Kosek with $500 innovative teaching awards: once to buy photographic supplies and once for his "adopt a telescope" program.

Disturbed that his 7th and 8th grade students "knew math skills but not how to apply them," **Loren Hutchins** assigned them to build a boat. For the past three years, his "boat class" at Hampton (New Hampshire) Academy and Junior High has measured, compared building material costs, and hammered away on a 17-foot Nahant dory designed by the U.S. Navy.

"The students had to redesign one end after it was damaged by chairs in the storage room—but that's real life," says Hutchins, a 14-year teaching veteran.

When will the boat be launched? "I don't know," he admits. "That's not the object—teaching kids how to think for themselves is."

Winner of NEA's 1982 Irvamae Applegate International Understanding Award is **Eugene P. Tinory,** social studies teacher at E. W. Thurston Junior High School in West Roxbury, Massachusetts. Tinory has advised the school's World Organization Study Club for 23 years. The club's 200 student members annually tour the UN.

Joe Di Dio

Although this summer's NEA Representative Assembly was her first, Paradise Valley, Arizona, special education aide **Vicki Musen** was determined to play an active role . . . and she did. Backed by other members of the NEA Educational Support Caucus, Musen was designated the contact person to help build a consensus among delegates for an item of new business establishing a special NEA committee to address support staff concerns. With 100 delegate signatures endorsing the proposal, the Assembly voted overwhelming approval for the item.

United North Marion (Oregon) Educators Association President **David Laney** believes one-on-one communication can boost local membership and strength. And his record proves it. In his first two years as president, UNMEA membership jumped from 26 to 74 out of a 100-member potential. Now beginning a second two-year term, Laney aggressively pursues grievances and has tripled his local's participation in political action. For his work, Laney recently received OEA's Leadership Award.

In the heat of a smoggy July day, thousands of delegates to the 1982 NEA Representative Assembly marched through the streets of Los Angeles with signs protesting the various assaults on public education. Waiting for them at the Convention Center was **Paul August,** an Oakland, California, high school teacher who led the throng in song.

Few others were as qualified to head up the singing as August, who used an NEA Hilda Maehling Fellowship in 1980 to launch a new album of songs about children, teachers, and teacher struggles, titled "Mindworker." The album features NEA's theme song "We Teach the Children." The title song has also been released as a single record. The single and album (cassette tape only) are available from John Paul Records, 2187 39th Ave., Oakland, CA 94601.

Arnie Weissmann

"Hi there, boys and girls! This is your old friend Uncle Jim welcoming you to History Time. . . ."

So begins the first chapter of a homemade text on colonial America written by NEA member **Jim Wallace,** a history teacher at Elgin (Illinois) High School.

"I begin that way because I want my students to know this class is different," says Wallace, who has never missed a day in his 22 years of teaching.

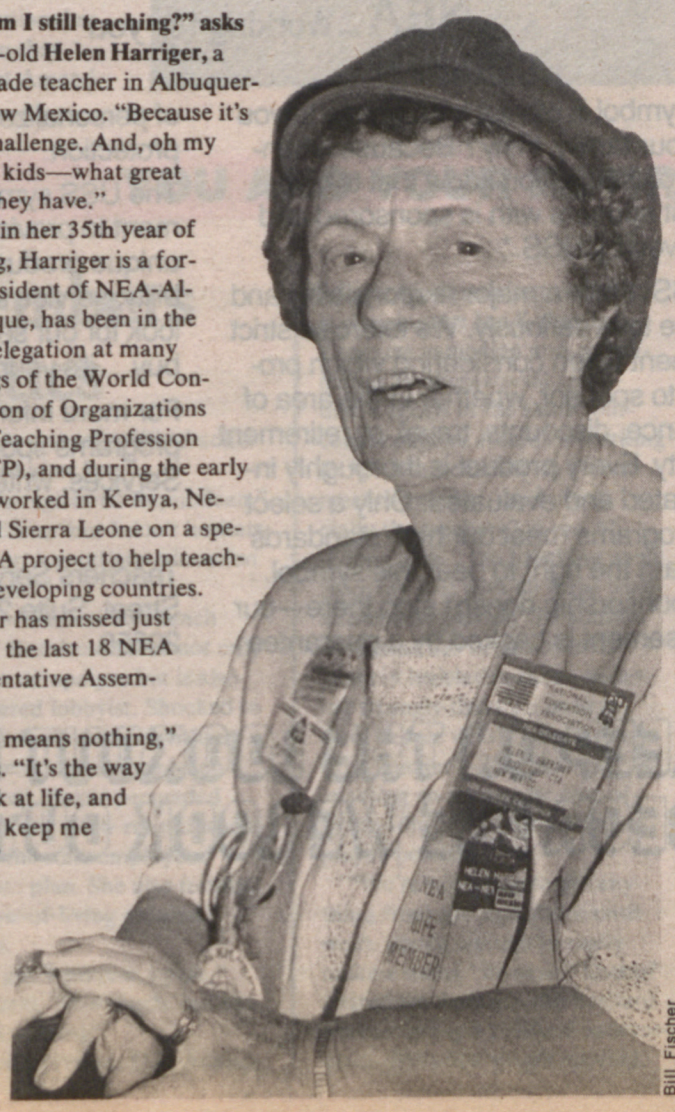
He has a natural ability to relate to students—and an unorthodox classroom style. To get a point across and keep his classes interested, he may climb up on his desk, lie down on the floor, or throw things.

"If I'm not mentally exhausted when I go home," Wallace believes, "I've loafed."

"Why am I still teaching?" asks 74-year-old **Helen Harriger,** a third grade teacher in Albuquerque, New Mexico. "Because it's still a challenge. And, oh my—these kids—what great minds they have."

Now in her 35th year of teaching, Harriger is a former president of NEA-Albuquerque, has been in the NEA delegation at many meetings of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP), and during the early 1970's worked in Kenya, Nepal, and Sierra Leone on a special NEA project to help teachers in developing countries. Harriger has missed just three of the last 18 NEA Representative Assemblies.

"Age means nothing," she says. "It's the way you look at life, and my kids keep me young."



Bill Fischer

Alabama education support member **Ophelia Lewis** of Greenville was spotlighted in the *Birmingham News* recently for her ability to save school cafeteria money *and* prepare nutritious meals.

When Lewis took over as cafeteria manager and cook at W. O. Palmer School 11 years ago, the luncheon operation was in the red. Last September, Lewis started the year $100,000 in the black.

How does she do it? By "buying carefully from local dealers" and "taking everything the government offers—and using it."

The 1,600 elementary students who eat at Palmer aren't concerned about Lewis's financial genius. Ask them and they'll tell you about her delicious butter cookies. . . .

Joe DiDio

RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

ECONOMICS

Understanding Taxes. U.S. Treasury Department, Internal Revenue Service. Curriculum package. Uses a modular format to allow teachers to incorporate materials into a variety of courses. Package includes—

- Student modules on such topics as taxpayer rights and responsibilities, preparing a tax return, and the economics of taxation.
- Teacher guides that match student materials and also include reproducible copies and blow-ups of tax forms and a copy of Publication 17, *Your Federal Income Tax.*
- Three films in 16mm or videotape format.

Entire program is available at no cost. Previous participants should expect ordering materials to arrive every September. New users should contact the Taxpayer Education Coordinator at the nearest IRS office.

GUIDANCE

Getting Along with Your Teachers. Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. Hardback. An informal manual that helps students in grades 3-7 see things from the teacher's point of view—the reason for, say, separating best friends or for the teacher's having a bad day. 1981. 96 pp. Illus. $7.50. Abingdon, 201 Eighth Ave., South, Nashville, TN 37202—or from booksellers.

Teenage Pregnancy—What Can Be Done? Booklet for adults who deal with young people. Discusses what to do about the more than a million teenagers—most unmarried—who become pregnant each year. 1981. 28 pp. Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 594. 50¢. Public Affairs Committee, 381 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016.

HEALTH

The leaflets listed below on vision and eye care are available free with a stamped self-addressed #10 envelope (any four leaflets weigh about an ounce) from the American Optometric Assn., Communications Div., TE, 243 N. Lindbergh Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63141:

Answers to Your Questions About Bifocals for Children

Answers to Your Questions About Color Deficiency

Answers to Your Questions About Eye Coordination

Answers to Your Questions About Nearsightedness

A Closer Look at Reading and Vision

Facts You Should Know About Vision and School Achievement

A Teacher's Guide to Vision Problems

To View or Not To View.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The following publications, which teachers may wish to use in preparing for observances of World Food Day (always held on October 16), are available free in single copies from the National Committee for World Food Day, 1776 F St., N.W., Washington, DC 20437.

World Hunger: Activities for Children, K-6.

World Hunger: High School Study Guide and Resource List.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Counterpoint. Newspaper published twice a year, in May and November. Covers programs, issues, and trends in special education and rehabilitation. Each issue, 32 pp. Annual subscription, $9; Canada and overseas, $12. Counterpoint Subscriber Service, 3705 S. George Mason Dr., Suite C-4, Falls Church, VA 22041.

VOCATIONAL/CAREER EDUCATION

Buildings in Miniature. Gerald E. Jensen. Paperback. Describes how to plan, construct, and assemble scale models of real, remembered, or imaginary buildings. Takes the reader step-by-step through the process of building a dollhouse. Includes a chapter describing 17 different architectural styles. 1982. 221 pp. $9.95. Chilton Book Co., Radnor, PA 19089—or from booksellers.

WRITING

Captain Proofreader's Foolproof Writing Program. John Marshall Carter. Back Door Press. Booklet (mimeographed). Presents writing activities tested by the author, a public school social studies and English teacher. 1982. 64 pp. $4, including postage. John Marshall Carter, 621 S. Hamilton St., Eden, NC 27288.

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YOU AND THE LAW

Supreme Court Hedges On Library Censorship

The first school library book banning case ever to reach the U.S. Supreme Court ended this summer in a split decision that raises almost as many questions as it answers about just how far a school board may legally go in removing books from a school library.

The American Library Association reports about 1,000 incidents of school and public library censorship each year, so the issue is sure to arise again.

In Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico, the Court narrowly affirmed (by a 5-4 vote) a Second Circuit Court of Appeals decision to send the case back to the district court for a new trial.

In early August, the Island Trees school board returned to school library shelves the nine books it banned six years ago, but ordered librarians to notify the parents of any student checking out one of the books. Steven Pico, the former student who filed the original lawsuit, is now considering whether to fight this notification requirement as a continuing abridgement of students' First Amendment rights.

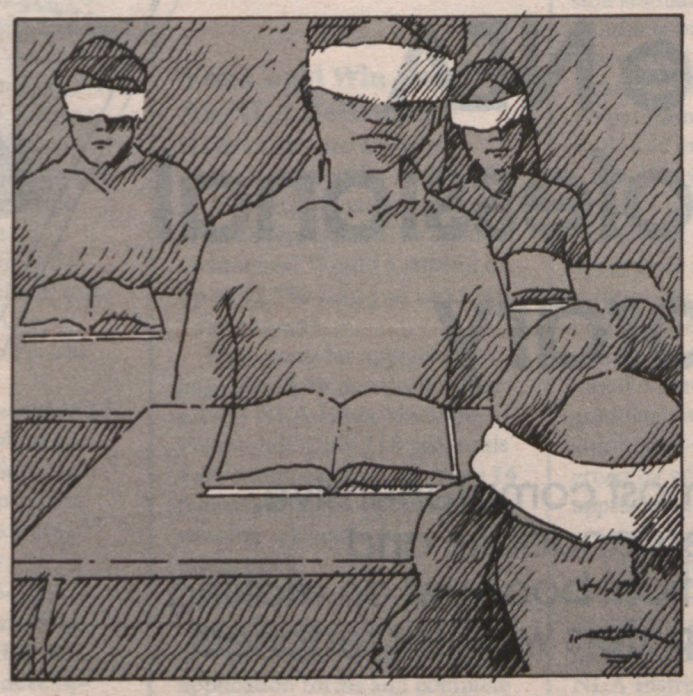
The Supreme Court didn't address the question of whether a school board's decision not to *purchase* certain books may infringe on a student's constitutional rights. The focus was on *removal* of books from library shelves once they're there. Nor did the court consider the question of the rights—if any—of a teacher or school librarian in such a censorship attempt.

The plurality opinion, written by Justice William Brennan, joined by Justices Thurgood Marshall and John Paul Stevens, held that students have a First Amendment "right to receive information"—a right that the Island Trees school board may have infringed. It also supported the position taken in NEA's friend-of-the-court brief—that the First Amendment limits a local school board's exercise of its discretion to remove books from secondary school libraries.

The plurality opinion explained that boards can't remove books from school libraries simply because they dislike the ideas contained in them and seek by their removal to "prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion."

A separate concurring opinion, written by Justice Harry Blackmun, supports this conclusion but disagrees with the finding of a "right to receive information." Blackmun said the limited constitutional restriction that the First Amendment imposes on school officials must be balanced with the broad state authority to regulate education.

A proper balance, he said, would mean that school officials may not remove books from libraries for the *purpose* of restricting access to political ideas or social perspectives.



The Island Trees case began in 1976 in Levittown, N.Y., when the school board removed nine books from school libraries, prompting Steven Pico and four other high school students to sue the school district.

The banned books—some minor classics—included Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five,* Alice Childress's *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich,* Desmond Morris's *Naked Ape,* and two anthologies.

A school board press release explaining the purge claimed the books contained "material which is offensive to Christians, Jews, Blacks, and Americans in general," as well as "obscenities, blasphemies, brutality and perversion beyond description."

The Supreme Court's plurality opinion has some strong words to say about the extent of a school board's power. Board members might rightfully claim absolute discretion in curriculum matters by reliance on their duty to inculcate community values in the schools, the justices wrote. But that duty is misplaced when a board attempts to extend its claim of *absolute* discretion beyond the compulsory environment of the classroom into the library, where voluntary inquiry is paramount.

The justices held that the school board has *significant* discretion to determine the library's content, but said such discretion can't be exercised in a narrowly partisan or political manner.

The motivation behind a board's action is key to determining if a book removal denies students their rights. A book removal is unconstitutional, the plurality opinion said, if board members' primary motive is to get rid of books they dislike on the basis of their personal or political biases.

The justices also found a possibility that the Island Trees board's book removal procedures

were highly irregular and ad hoc —the complete opposite of procedures that might allay suspicions about a board's unconstitutional motivations.

Students had charged that the board—ignoring the advice of literary experts, libraries, and teachers, as well as publications that rate books for secondary students—had based its decision solely on an objectionable book list put out by a conservative parents group and not on an independent board review of other books in the library.

The plurality opinion noted that the board ignored the superintendent's recommendation that it follow district policy to reach its removal decisions. Instead, the board resorted to the extraordinary procedure of setting up its own book review committee—then later rejected that committee's advice without explanation.

The dissenting justices held that students have no First Amendment right to have access to particular books in a school library.

They also believed that the plurality opinion rejected what they called a basic concept of public education: that the states and locally elected school boards should have the responsibility for determining educational policy.

—Sheilah Vance

YOU AND YOUR RETIREMENT

Retired NEA Members Plunge into Politics

• In Nevada, retired science and math teacher Bill Middleton works with active teachers on behalf of pro-education candidates for the U.S. Congress. He attended the Democratic National Party Conference in Philadelphia last June.

• In Kansas, Edna Stevens, a retired elementary and reading teacher, addresses envelopes, checks voter registration, and attends campaign breakfasts. She likes politics because "I have more time now and I need something that's challenging."

• In Maine, G. Caroline Morris was so respected as a teacher lobbyist that when she retired after 44 years of teaching and guidance counseling, the Maine Teachers Association named its annual political activity award after her.

"I'm a registered Republican," says Morris, "but I don't hesitate to support a good pro-education Democrat."

• In Florida, retired French teacher Kathleen Baker not only works in campaigns but is also a registered lobbyist. Shocked to discover she would be without group health insurance when she retired, Baker persuaded legislators to allow retired teachers into the state employees' insurance plan. She also testified for a cost-of-living pension increase.

"We got 3 percent a year," she reports. "Not much, but better than nothing."

• In Pennsylvania, Don Adams, a retired industrial arts teacher, is chairing the Joe Kolter-for-Congress campaign and coordinating a gubernatorial candidate's efforts in the same four-county region. Adams is working to "get both candidates out to meet the public—and especially the teachers" in the Aliquippa area. "I'm breaking away from my diet with all these wine-and-cheese parties," he admits.

Adams has been active for years in legislative races, believing strongly that "we need to elect people who'll help the retired teacher"—for example, by enacting an automatic cost-of-living adjustment for public employee pensions.

"We're not going to get anything from the legislature until we're strong enough to really make a stand," he says. "Lots of retired teachers are still hesitant about making a political endorsement. But once we get moving, we're a very viable political force."

These retired NEA members and thousands of others around the nation constitute a vast source of talent and energy that's being tapped this fall in Association political efforts.

As Higgins Bailey, director of NEA's new retirement program, told the *Wall Street Journal* recently, "Retired people have the time, the contacts, the leadership skills, and often are the best givers in terms of political activity."

Retired NEA members understand the importance of getting the right candidates elected to office—an understanding that comes from long personal experience in public education, where every major decision is made by politicians.

Whether working together with active Association members, with retirees from other occupations, or in community-wide coalitions, retired teachers are contributing in a big way to America's bipartisan system. Some hold office within their political parties.

"NEA retired members provide invaluable help in registration drives, get-out-the vote campaigns, and other political tasks," observes Ken Melley, director of NEA Political Affairs. "We need more of our retired members involved."

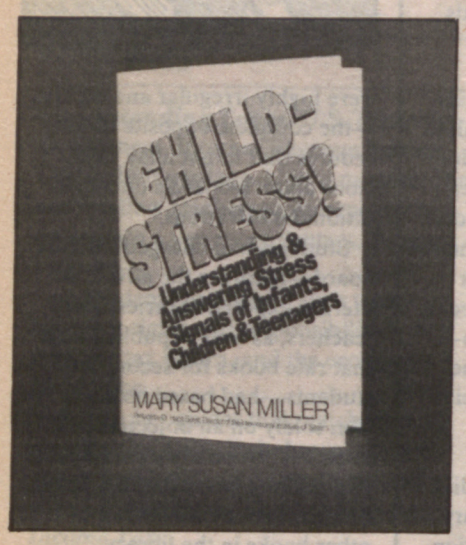
If you are retired and would like to volunteer your time for political or lobbying activities, contact your local Association.

If you know retired NEA members, suggest that they donate a few hours a week to protect their interests—both as lifelong educators and as retired public employees.

—Barbara Lawless

BOOK BEAT

Of Child Stress And Evolution



Childstress! by **Mary Susan Miller.** Doubleday. 264 pp. $14.95.

Adults prefer to think of children as not having to deal with stress, yet stress is a part of every life, however young. The work of physician Hans Selye has made the mental health community aware of the effects of stress and has pointed out strategies for coping with it. In *Childstress,* Mary Susan Miller applies Selye's work to children and gives parents and teachers practical suggestions for ways to help children deal with stress.

Miller lists five behavior patterns associated with difficulty in handling stress: *aggression, self-destruction, escape, apathy* and *playing the game*. She then gives adults specific suggestions to help children who show signs of using any of these patterns. She shows parents how to understand the cause of frustration, identify the source of stress, and condition children to change their behavior.

In the final chapter, Miller suggests that parents who see stress as a positive rather than a negative force, who expect their children to be accountable rather than overprotected, and who supply motivation through love rather than fear can raise children who cope.

Reviewed by Mary B. Wall, guidance counselor, Mainland Regional High School, Linwood, New Jersey.

The Monkey Business; A Scientist Looks at Creationism by **Niles Eldredge.** Washington Square Press. 157 pp. Paperback $2.95.

Hardly monkey business, creationism is a serious issue in American public education. Creationists are lobbying for it, in its new "scientific" form, across the country. They argue that there are two scientific theories or models—*evolution* and *creationism*—for explaining the origin and development of life. Author Eldredge notes that "by claiming the two models are equally viable, [creationists] appeal to the traditional American sense of 'fair play' to include *both* in the school curriculum."

Should teachers, school boards, and legislatures yield to this innocuous-sounding request for equal time? Eldredge, a paleontologist and curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, says *no*. He presents evidence from scientific findings and philosophical analysis demonstrating that creation-science is not science at all and therefore has no place in the science classroom. He builds a strong case for evolution as the *only* scientific notion that explains the mass of information about past and present life that scientists have accumulated over the past 200 years.

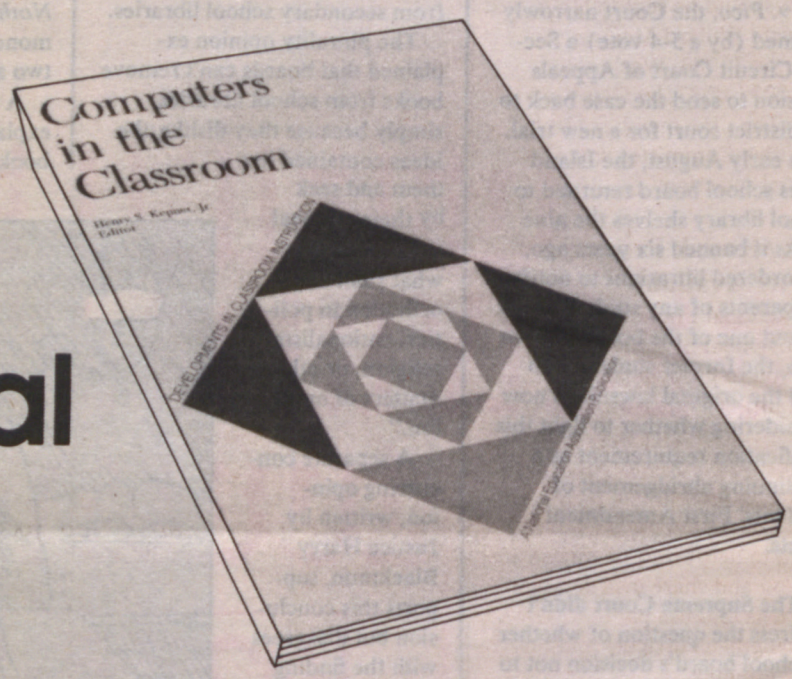
However, in his discussion of what science is, Eldredge reminds us that "it is in the nature of things that nothing in science can possibly be the last word." Every hypothesis is potentially falsifiable and consequently subject to change. This characteristic of science is what distinguishes it from creationism. For example, fossil finds may cause scientists to reject a hypothesis about the origin of a species. But will new information about the sun or moon cause creationists to change their thinking about the appearance of "great lights" on the fourth day of creation?

So far evolutionary theory has withstood the test of time. The issue among scientists is not whether evolution occurs, but *how* life evolves. In his chapter "The Evolution of Evolutionary Theory," Eldredge discusses the current controversies over how the evolution process operates. He also traces the historical development of the theory.

Ultimately, teachers will be on the front line in local deliberations over creationism. When creationists attack evolutionary theory or ask why schools don't teach the "dual model," teachers must come up with the answer. *The Monkey Business* will help them and other concerned citizens by providing much of the necessary information in this battle for public opinion.

Reviewed by Richard J. Rezba, associate professor of science education, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond.

NEW from the NEA Professional Library



The most comprehensive, understandable, and practical book yet on making computers work for teachers

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— Bruce Brombacher
1982 Teacher of the Year

Computers in the Classroom, edited by Henry S. Kepner, Jr., focuses on instructional uses for computers. This fine addition to the NEA Professional Library gives personalized suggestions for elementary, middle school and secondary teachers and offers specific applications for language arts/reading, social studies, fine arts, business education and careers, science, and mathematics classes.

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14

Your NEA

REACHING OUT

NEA Seeks New Executive Director

Applications are now being accepted for the position of NEA executive director—the Association's top staff management post. The current executive director, Terry Herndon, is resigning next May to pursue other interests.

Letters of application or nomination should be sent to NEA President Willard McGuire, P.O. Box 33083, Washington, DC 20033-0083, by October 31, 1982. The nine-member NEA Executive Committee will make the final selection.

NEA/Kodak Program Grants Available

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education invites you to participate in a new program: "Cameras in the Curriculum: A Challenge to Teacher Creativity." Supported by a quarter-million-dollar grant from Kodak, the program is designed to help NEA members develop and share instructional materials that use photography to strengthen curricula and improve learning.

Grants of $200 each will be awarded to the 130 individuals—at least two per state—submitting the best proposals. From these the top six will receive awards of up to $1,500. All winning proposals will be published and widely promoted.

For competition rules see your state Association periodical or the September 20 issue of the *NEA NOW* newsletter, or write to "Cameras in the Curriculum," NFIE, NEA Center.

When Writing NEA . . .

Except where otherwise indicated, the address for NEA Center is 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

IPD Conferences Set

NEA's 1982-83 regional Instruction and Professional Development conferences are open to all NEA members. For registration details write Felicia Haynes, IPD, NEA Center.

Mid-Atlantic—*October 15-17, Richmond, Kentucky:* curriculum, organizational development, techniques for incorporating Appalachian culture into instructional programs.

Northeast—*November 5-7, Providence, Rhode Island:* testing, educational technology, rallying support for the public schools.

Pacific States—*November 12-14, San Francisco, California:* wide-ranging instructional issues, with focus on problem solving—and a post-congressional-election review.

Western—*December 10-12, Overland Park, Kansas:* traditional and futuristic IPD sessions; organizational development emphasis.

Midwest—*January 7-9, Dearborn, Michigan:* using political clout to support educational excellence.

Southeast—*January 14-16, Little Rock, Arkansas:* using sound educational practices to maintain professional ethics and job security.

Celebrate American Education Week!

The NEA Professional Library has put together a packet of leaflets and other materials to help you observe American Education Week (November 14-20) in your school. Cost is $5.95.

To order, write to American Education Week, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516, or call (203) 934-2669.

You Could Win An NEA Fellowship

Have an idea for a way to advance Association work, improve professional development, or hone professional tools and techniques? Would a stipend of up to $2,500 help you carry out your project?

If so, consider applying—individually or as a group—for a 1983 NEA Hilda Maehling Fellowship. Only 118 proposals were submitted for last year's 14 fellowships, so your chances of winning are better than you might think.

Applications must be postmarked no later than December 1. Your state Association has application forms and complete information, or you may write to the Hilda Maehling Fellowship Program at NEA Center.

TAKING A STAND

NEA Proposes Reforms In Teacher Training

Ten state Associations have begun implementing a bold new NEA action plan to reform the way teachers are trained. The state efforts will involve coalition-building, research, public relations, and lobbying.

The NEA plan sets forth the best thinking of practicing teachers—most of them dissatisfied with their own preparation.

It calls for rigorous admission standards for colleges of education, based on firm evidence of potential success as a classroom teacher; teacher preparation programs based on skills and experiences that practitioners say are necessary for effective practice; ample opportunities for education students to apply their new knowledge and skills to the "real world" of teaching while they're still in school; teaching credentials based on multiple measures of a graduate's ability to teach; and autonomous state agencies, governed by practicing teachers, to approve teacher education programs and certify new teachers.

The birth of this proposal shows how NEA's democratic decision-making works. An initial draft hammered out by NEA Instruction and Professional Development staff over a three-year period was submitted in July 1981 to NEA's 7,000-delegate Representative Assembly (RA).

Controversy there centered on the wisdom of NEA's publishing a list of skills that new teachers should have and the danger of school administrators' misusing these standards to evaluate current teachers. The RA finally voted to refer the document to NEA's Standing Committee on Instruction and Professional Development for a total rewrite based on "wide member input."

The committee held hearings at the six NEA-IPD regional conferences last winter. Three more drafts were prepared; each was mailed to every state Association and to NEA's 200 largest locals. Between the second and third drafts, NEA funded 15 state Association "writing projects," in which groups of teachers were asked to provide additional substance for a major section of the document.

The rewritten plan was approved by the NEA Board of Directors and referred to the July 1982 RA, where it was endorsed after a lengthy floor debate. More detailed coverage of *Excellence in Our Schools, Teacher Education: An Action Plan* will appear in the November issue of *NEA Today*. Meanwhile, your UniServ director has a copy of the document.

LOOKING BACK

Margaret (Maggie) Bozeman—the Alabama Education Association activist jailed on a trumped-up "vote fraud" charge *(NEA Reporter,* April-May '82)—was honored with a special award at NEA's 16th Annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Banquet this summer in Los Angeles.

Bozeman, who earlier this year became a symbol of the need to extend the Voting Rights Act, was saluted for her "courage in inspiring and assisting all citizens to exercise their right to vote."

Bozeman is now on a work-release program in Tuskegee, Alabama, and is seeking a full pardon of her four-year conviction. Her daughter accepted the NEA award in her behalf.

Idaho government teacher **Mark Larson's** cartoon book, *Teaching Are Fun,* has passed the 3,000 mark in sales, spurred by a March '82 *NEA Reporter* article and an Idaho Education Association booth at this summer's NEA Representative Assembly. "I'm pleased that teachers use and enjoy the book," Larson beams. Proceeds from *Teaching Are Fun* go to the IEA crisis fund, which assists locals in major financial emergencies. The book is still available for $3 from IEA, 620 N. 6th Street, Box 2638, Boise, ID 83701.

"It's easier than teaching school," laughs **Jolene Prewit-Parker** after writing her first book *(Bahama Rapture,* a historical romance just published by Zebra Press). She should know: she taught English for three years in North Carolina until her contract was nonrenewed in 1979 without explanation. With the help of the North Carolina Association of Educators and NEA, Prewit-Parker won her case in court, setting an important precedent for probationary teachers *(NEA Reporter,* Sept. '81). She now lives in the Bahamas, where she says "I finally have time to write, something I've always wanted to do."

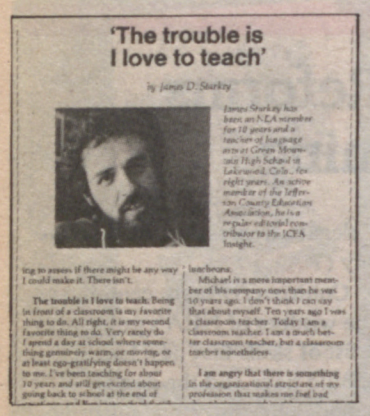
Sioux Falls (S. Dak.) Education Association past president **Jan Nicolay,** who appeared on the cover of the June '82 *NEA Reporter,* has fought her way through a crowded primary field of 15 candidates and landed a slot on the November ballot as a Republican candidate for the state legislature. Nicolay is an English and speech teacher at Washington High School in Sioux Falls.

50 Years Ago

Think school budget crises are something new? Here's what New York City attorney Aaron Sapiro had to say in the October 1932 *Journal of the National Education Association:*

"The teachers of America alone can give a permanent answer to the present crisis. But what do the politicians say and do? They try to solve this difficulty by saving expenses. They cut down the salaries of school teachers who dare not protest. They close schools. They drop special classes. . . . They look on education as the Jonah to be sacrificed to the god of the storms. But education is an Isiah—singing the eternal words of truth beyond the power of petty men to destroy—beyond the power of any generation to ignore. The hope of America in this crisis is the increased maintenance of education. There is no price too high to pay for education. There is no penalty too great to pay for ignorance."

Letters


'The trouble is I love to teach'

by James D. Starkey

James Starkey has been an NEA member for 10 years and a teacher of language arts at Green Mountain High School in Lakewood, Colo., for eight years. An active member of the Jefferson County Education Association, he is a regular editorial contributor to the JCEA Insight.

ing to assess if there might be any way I could make it. There isn't.

The trouble is I love to teach. Being in front of a classroom is my favorite thing to do. All right, it is my second favorite thing to do. Very rarely do I spend a day at school where something genuinely warm, or moving, or at least ego-gratifying doesn't happen to me. I've been teaching for about 10 years and still get excited about going back to school at the end of

teachers.

Michael is a most important member of his company now than he was 10 years ago. I don't think I can say that about myself. Ten years ago I was a classroom teacher. Today I am a classroom teacher. I am a much better classroom teacher, but a classroom teacher nonetheless.

I am angry that there is something in the organizational structure of my profession that makes me feel bad

'I Love To Teach'

Despite low pay, lack of professional advancement, and little respect, James D. Starkey [*June '82*] continues teaching. I too love to teach, but unlike Mr. Starkey I have called it quits. I refuse to be mistreated and abused any longer.

After five years of public school teaching, I have taken a leave of absence—probably permanent—to recuperate and reconsider.

The decision to leave was not an easy one. I am a good teacher. Colleagues expressed their regret at my decision. Students wrote letters to the school newspaper bemoaning my loss.

But when I weighed the pluses against the minuses—gargantuan stress, hypertension, a dismal salary, indifferent and disrespectful students, truckloads of busywork, nonexistent job security—the scale tipped so heavily to the negative side that I concluded it would be insane to remain on the job. The joy of teaching is obliterated by the frustrations of teaching. It's simply not worth it.

The trouble is not that we love to teach; it is that we are treated like menials but are expected to behave like martyrs and saints. If Mr. Starkey wants to teach in spite of that, he may do so. As for me—at least for now—enough is enough.

David Sudol
Indianola, Iowa

At least James Starkey has the opportunity to make a conscious choice whether to go to law school and have a higher standard of living or to stay at his position in teaching and do with a little less materially.

Even though he isn't keeping up with the Joneses, he has a job! I was lucky enough to teach for six years when I was laid off.

Have you ever thought about what it feels like to know you went through college to teach, then took 25 credits to keep a valid teaching certificate, only to earn a position in the unemployment line?

Upon arrival at the unemployment office, you are interrogated like a common criminal and sent home with the idea reinforced that you are only trained to teach and you will probably never be granted the opportunity to do that again unless you want to substitute for the rest of your life. . . .

Mary Hilliker
Bath, Michigan

Nuclear Arms

In spite of the fact that we have enough weapons to completely destroy the earth and all its species several times over, we are still building nuclear arms. Aside from the huge amount of money this waste is costing the taxpayer, thus diverting needed educational funds, I find it frightening that many teachers are either indifferent or complacent about this world dilemma.

Why don't educators unite as the artists, physicians, clergy, and scientists have and form a "Teachers United for a Global Nuclear Arms Freeze and Disarmament?"

Ruth Von Bramer
Randallstown, Maryland

School Prayer

NEA's position opposing prayer in the public schools does not seem consistent with its valiant effort to ease the burdens of the impoverished and assert human rights. . . .

What is so objectionable about setting aside time in the school day for a moment of silent meditation? Why can't a psalm from the Bible be read? Why can't a Jewish child share one of his prayers with Christian children and vice versa? Surely NEA has had clergymen offer invocations and meal blessings at official functions. Did anyone storm out in protest?

At times I believe NEA is cutting its own throat with its narrow-minded opposition to prayer in the schools. While our organization is bemoaning the fact that parents are abandoning the public schools for private and parochial institutions, we offer no compromise or incentive to keep the children in the public schools.

I challenge NEA to seriously reevaluate its position. The school prayer movement already has the support of prominent political leaders like Sens. Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond, and Orrin Hatch. President Reagan has also spoken out in favor of this issue. . . .

Sylvia Landis
Pottstown, Pennsylvania

Creationism, Humanism

For public education, the issue of creationism is not merely whether a particular set of conclusions about the origin of species will be included in the curriculum. At issue, rather, is the proposition that the public schools should be used to indoctrinate *any* set of conclusions as a fixed, final, and unassailable doctrine. . . .

Democratic education has as much to fear from zealots who, in the name of "science," would close inquiry on a particular set of truths and ignore fundamental problems of methodology as it has to fear from zealots who, in the name of religion, would do the same.

David W. Adams
Kalamazoo, Michigan

My suggestion to educators involved in controversies with the New Right or various groups trying to censor "offensive" teaching materials is to understand their concerns and deal with them appropriately.

The conflict between secular humanistic ideologies and various theistic ideologies has been going on for some time. We must be knowledgeable about it. Evangelicals, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, etc., have a legitimate gripe. We as teachers have far too often been insensitive to the beliefs of students. I have had students come to my office in tears because their religious beliefs were publicly ridiculed in the classroom.

Schools may have been called to do an impossible task—to remain neutral in matters of faith and belief. It is also true that some religious people are offensive in pushing their beliefs or insisting on their viewpoints. We can hardly solve this problem by emulating their tactics.

Jerry Bergman
Spring Arbor, Michigan

'Best by Test'?

In my 30 years of teaching I have seen many, many of our more "intelligent" who could not survive in daily classroom teaching. Patience, compassion, and understanding of others are frequently alien to high intelligence. Being the "best on tests" does not necessarily produce a good teacher in the classroom.

This is not to advance a practice of hiring the worst applicants or excluding the "apparently brightest" at all. But too much emphasis on hiring only the "best by test" could be disastrous to public education.

Our society is not governed by laws passed by "top tested" legislators. Nor is the fate of the accused decided by a jury composed of top test scorers. Nor are . . . school board members made up solely of the elite when it comes to intelligence.

The humanistic attributes of common sense, perception of human needs, love of children, patience, and understanding certainly account for much more in a successful teaching experience. These attributes should not be minimized or overlooked.

John Helmick
LaVale, Maryland

Reagan and the Budget

NEA's "Chicken Little" approach to any program that cuts out waste and possible fraud is totally unrealistic and far beneath the professionalism of the teaching profession.

What has the Department of Education accomplished in its couple of years of existence? Its budget has run rampant, yet its accomplishments are nil. How long should a student be kept in an "English as a second language" program? Anyone really interested in learning would not need more than two years of this help, yet there are thousands of students who are apparently very content to stay in these programs throughout their school life.

Don't confuse cutting of programs with very valid need, such as those for the handicapped or disadvantaged, with the "frill" type of program that even teachers have had to question for validity.

George Chaplin
Clifton, New Jersey

Instead of being anti-Reagan and having to wait three years before another chance at working positively with Washington, why shouldn't the NEA be *capitalizing* on Reaganomics?

Warren Allen Smith
Stamford, Connecticut

Isn't the NEA ever going to give President Reagan a kind word? I hate to think that my dues are helping to down a man who obviously was desired by many people or he wouldn't have been elected.

I'm tired of seeing, every year, 10 to 15 students out of my classes of 20 getting free lunch, free breakfast, free dental care, free glasses, and free transportation while my taxes go up and up to support them.

I say more power to a man who is trying to put a stop to some of this.

Marian Lawson
Greeneville, Tennessee

I resent the NEA openly criticizing our President because he is attempting to get our economy back on its feet. We have had crowded classrooms for years and many other problems in our public schools. Was it President Reagan's fault *before* he took office?

Too many "freebies" have not increased our educational standards. Don't put all of the blame on [the President] for the problems that face our public educational system.

Glendene Brooks
Copperas Cove, Texas

I think the constant drumbeat by NEA for more socialism in the form of federal funds is out of step with the mainstream of teacher thinking and the public in general.

In my 29 years of teaching I've witnessed the pouring of federal dollars down educational rat holes with little worthwhile results, and I say let's put a stop to it.

Our schools are overstaffed with administrators who, in many cases, came up through the ranks as poor classroom teachers, went on to earn some administration credits, and end up running the show.

We should be devoting our efforts to rewarding the outstanding classroom teachers and stop trying to play politics for federal slush funds.

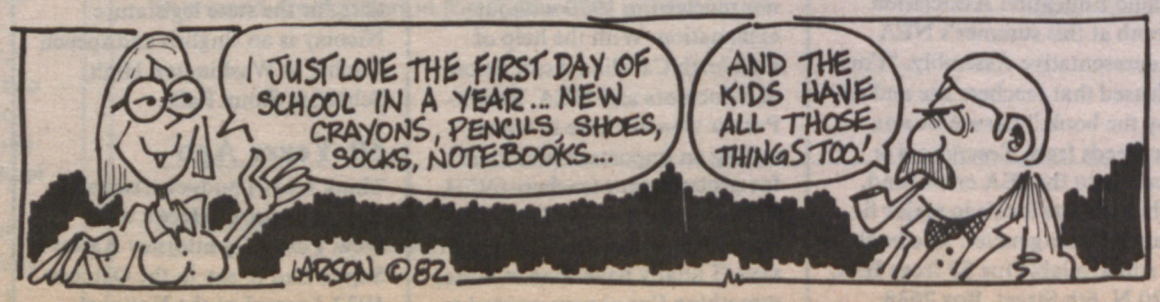
Samuel E. Hayes
Spruce Creek, Pennsylvania

President Reagan has done it again! By his failure to [accept NEA's invitation to] address the delegates during the Association's 1982 convention in Los Angeles, or at the very least to send us his good wishes, he has once more displayed his disdain for public school teachers and their students.

While I certainly did not expect Mr. Reagan to drop what he was doing, the fact that he was in Los Angeles during the [time of the convention] would have made it much easier for him to at least acknowledge the delegates and the almost two million NEA members they represent.

The message is quite clear: President Reagan and his Administration are contemptuous of us. What other message could be drawn from his failure to recognize the existence of the second largest political action group in America?

Robert Ritzer
Bergenfield, New Jersey


I JUST LOVE THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL IN A YEAR... NEW CRAYONS, PENCILS, SHOES, SOCKS, NOTEBOOKS...
AND THE KIDS HAVE ALL THOSE THINGS TOO!
LARSON ©82

What's your opinion? NEA members are cordially invited to use this page to exchange ideas with their 1.7 million colleagues around the nation. Correspondence should be addressed to "Letters," NEA TODAY, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Debate

Must every student become 'computer literate'?

Joe Di Dio

YES

Julie McGee is project director of computer curriculum development at Lyons Township High School, La Grange, Illinois. She holds an M.A. in English Literature and has taught English for 17 years. A member of NEA, she also serves on the Standing Committee on Instructional Technology of the National Council of Teachers of English.

A funny thing happened on the way to my English class—I got a computer and discovered some new ways to teach.

Numerous publications assure us that, like the Russians, "The computers are coming! The computers are coming!" And many teachers respond with about the same enthusiasm they might feel if indeed the Russians were landing on our shores.

Some of my colleagues assert, "The computer is just another overhead projector. Everyone said that would change education too." Unfortunately, much of the currently available software uses the computer as a kind of electronic overhead projector, an unnecessarily expensive way to present instructional material.

But if we limit our consideration of the computer to seeing it only as a presenter of traditional instruction, we will fail to see its full potential. Properly programmed, the computer can be a highly effective educational tool.

Teachers need training to understand the various educational functions that computers can perform. The simplest is drill and practice. Students complete exercises much as they would with a workbook, except that they find out immediately if their answers are correct or not. Such a use has its advantages: the computer is patient, willing to repeat, and uncritical. When more quality software becomes available, the computer will be able to gear instruction to meet individual needs.

The computer can, however, do much more. It can stimulate students to think, to make decisions, and to explore a world beyond the classroom. For example, although our students may never run for President, they can make decisions about campaigning and issues and see how these decisions affect the outcome of a computer-simulated election.

For students to use any already programmed material requires very little "computer literacy." About the only skills one needs are those required to operate a typewriter: the ability to locate keys on a keyboard and to turn a switch on. In fact, one error schools frequently make is to attempt to teach everyone how to program the computer.

Still, a microcomputer has far greater capabilities than the presentation of programmed materials. This article is being written on a microcomputer with a word processing program. I can insert, delete, and rearrange material by pressing a few keys. My well-used bottle of white-out is in the trash can. My students compose on the computer, and because revision does not require recopying an entire paper, they are more willing to revise. The result is better writing.

Students who want to learn how to program find that the computer synthesizes their mathematical and language skills. Programming requires the logical use of language—and may even help us learn how to think. There is little doubt that computer skills will be an asset in tomorrow's job market.

The timorous argue that constantly changing technology will make today's equipment and languages obsolete in a few years. So, they say, let's wait awhile and see what develops. This argument assumes, however, that knowledge gained on one computer or with one language will not be applicable to another. That is rather like arguing that if I learn to drive a Ford, I will have to start all over again when I get a Mercedes.

And while we're waiting for the next generation of computers to arrive, our students are learning nothing about a technology that will be an important part of their futures. Can we afford to wait?

I think not.

The computers ARE coming. No college catalog I have seen offers a course in Overhead Projection 101, but the catalogs overflow with computer offerings. The computer will not go away. What teachers must decide is how this new technology can be used most effectively. These decisions should not be left to commercial interests. As teachers, our challenge is to integrate the microcomputer into a curriculum that meets its objectives while retaining its humanity.

Bill Livingston

NO

A. Daniel Peck is senior professor of secondary/postsecondary education at San Francisco State University, where he has been deeply involved in teacher education for 30 years. He founded the Educational Technology Center at SFSU in 1960 and ran it until 1975. An NEA life member, he currently supervises student teachers at the middle and high school levels.

As we move into a world that increasingly depends on the new electronic technology of computers, an awesome thing is happening in our schools. It is almost like a new religion—a computer-oriented creed with its own liturgy, clergy, and adherents whose brand of "born again" fervor brooks no heretics.

This year computers will be showing up in record numbers in elementary and secondary classrooms across America. As the new orthodoxy sweeps the land and we hear the cry of "computer literacy for everybody," few teachers seem to be raising questioning voices. Administrators sing the computer's praises and hurry to get on the bandwagon. Parents, too, want their children to grow up computer-smart.

The computer companies are mounting high-powered school sales campaigns, armed with studies showing that their products can be used as educational tools for almost any age group. And schools are buying. Education dollars seem to be available for computers as for nothing else. Some 15 percent of the nation's total instructional materials budget for 1982-83 is reportedly destined for computers and their associated programs (software). Prices are down to the $2,000-$3,000 range for the average microcomputer, and now some of the manufacturers even want to give them away to schools—if Congress will make such donations tax-deductible.

General purpose microcomputers *can* be used to teach, given adequate time *and appropriate software*. There's the rub. Researchers at Columbia University's Teachers College recently studied the instructional software currently available —and found most of it boring, of questionable educational value, or both.

Too many of the prepackaged programs concentrate on drill and repetition and fail to encourage students' independent thinking. One software developer charges most publishers with "taking a workbook and giving it to a programmer, so what you get is an electronic workbook"—a waste of the computer's unique capacities as a machine that can think.

Good teachers must spend hours adjusting commercial computer programs to their classroom needs. Some experts suggest that teachers instead create their *own* software—somewhat akin to expecting teachers to write their own textbooks. Training to help teachers use computers has lagged far behind the purchasing of classroom hardware.

To use this hardware, students must have a high degree of "computer literacy." Computer proselytizers readily admit as much but insist that computer literacy instruction must come *first* so that the computer can then help children to become literate in basic academic subjects. This is like requiring a course in engine design and development before allowing someone to drive an automobile.

I'm convinced that the financial investment and operational costs involved make computer-assisted instruction the most outlandishly expensive means ever conceived to teach the three R's.

I have yet to be persuaded that our children will be unemployable if they graduate from high school without computer literacy. The technology is changing so fast that computer skills taught in today's K-12 classrooms will be largely obsolete by the time students enter the job market. I expect, for example, development of a computer that speaks *our* language, which will make the various computer languages passé.

As teachers, I think we have a responsibility to our profession and to our students to ask some pointed questions:

- What happens to students' social skills when they spend hours of classroom time "interfacing"—not with other human beings but with a machine?
- Does the cost of computers pose new equity problems, widening the gap between rich and poor school districts?
- As computer costs go down and teacher salaries go up, are we heading for a time when efficiency-minded school boards will decide it's cheaper to provide each student with a home microcomputer and close the schools?

Knowing the history of educational innovations embraced as panaceas and then abandoned, are we *sure* we want to hop on this latest bandwagon?

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

HEALTH

Do You *Really* Need Vitamin Supplements?

While vitamin faddists tell us that massive doses of vitamins will cure the common cold, raise our energy levels, and in general make us more vibrant individuals, traditional nutritionists insist that we already get plenty of vitamins in ordinary foods and that vitamin supplements are expensive, unnecessary, and sometimes even harmful.

Which side should you believe? As usual, the truth seems to be somewhere in the middle.

Vitamins are essential to both physical and mental well-being. Rickets, scurvy, pellagra, and many other diseases are known to be caused by vitamin deficiencies. There is no scientific evidence for many of the claims made by vitamin advocates, however. For instance, there's been no irrefutable proof that Vitamin C either prevents colds or lessens their symptoms.

Vitamins are needed in only minute amounts (most of a vitamin pill consists of filler). It's true that a well balanced diet will provide all the vitamins an average adult needs. But the sad fact is that few Americans today eat a well balanced diet. In fact, studies have found many of us to be actually *malnourished*, thanks to overprocessed junk food and poor eating habits.

What's more, smoking, drinking, illness, dieting, pregnancy, stress, and oral contraceptives can increase vitamin needs to the point where diet alone is no longer sufficient.

Nutrition is an inexact science, since no two human beings are quite alike. Your vitamin requirements vary with your age, health, weight, degree of physical activity—and even the climate you live in. So while many of the wild claims about vitamins have no reasonable scientific basis, you may well benefit from the extra insurance of a vitamin supplement.

Because vitamins can be toxic if taken in massive doses, and because too much of one may cause a deficiency of others, it's important to consult with your doctor before taking any vitamin supplement other than a low-potency, well balanced multiple vitamin. Never take large amounts of the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) without medical supervision, since they can build up to toxic levels if taken faster than your body can use them.

—NEA Special Services

MONEY

How To Borrow Wisely

"*Neither a borrower nor a lender be.*" Shakespeare's advice is not much use in today's complicated financial environment. Few of us will live our lives without borrowing a substantial sum of money at least once.

In the 1970's, financial experts told us we could beat inflation by buying everything on credit and repaying our debts with "cheaper" dollars. Unfortunately, when the inflation rate slowed, many families discovered they had gotten themselves deeply in debt and could no longer rely on increasing incomes to bail them out.

Today, with interest rates for consumer loans often well over 20 percent and salary increases no longer automatic, these same experts are telling us we should pay cash for everything—or do without.

But high interest rates don't necessarily mean "doing without." There is still a place for the prudent use of credit in today's economy. What high interest rates do mean is that you must be more careful in choosing how and why you borrow money. Before you decide to take out a loan, or buy an item on credit, make sure you're doing it for the right reasons.

When you borrow, you're paying a fee (the interest charge) for the privilege of enjoying your purchase immediately, instead of waiting until you've saved enough money to make the purchase outright. In some cases, such as when buying a home or automobile, credit is almost a necessity because of the long time it would take to save the required cash. If the situation is a genuine emergency, or a special opportunity to save money, *not* borrowing would be foolish.

So how can you tell if your borrowing habits are prudent? Ask yourself—

- Would I make this purchase if I had the cash on hand, or am I more enticed by the easy credit terms?
- Am I making this purchase because I need to, or am I simply trying to cheer myself up, or impress other people?
- Can I afford to pay this loan back, or am I counting on a future increase in my income that may not happen?
- Do I have enough emergency cash reserves to cover this debt in case of an unexpected financial reversal, or will a minor interruption of my income become a major disaster?
- Is my borrowing part of a well thought out budget, or am I using credit to cover living beyond my means?
- If borrowing for investment purposes, have I weighed the risks involved carefully, or am I letting this "golden opportunity" blind me to what might happen if things don't work out?

If you can honestly answer 'yes' to the first part of each question and 'no' to the second, then you are probably borrowing prudently.

Borrowing money for even the best reasons, however, doesn't mean you're using credit wisely if you don't shop carefully for your loan. There are many ways to finance a purchase, each with its own pluses and minuses.

When looking for a loan—

- Shop around. The 1969 Truth in Lending law requires lenders to tell you exactly how much it will cost you to borrow money, but the many ways interest rates can be computed make it difficult to understand the information that lenders give you. Be sure you're "comparing apples to apples" by converting all interest charges into Annual Percentage Rates.
- In general, try to make the largest down payment you can afford, and keep the repayment period as short as possible. The longer you're using the lender's money, the greater your total interest charge.
- Ask if you're being charged for credit life insurance. It's usually overpriced and not required.
- Remember that cash advances are almost always the most expensive way to borrow and should be used only in absolute emergencies.
- When taking a long-term loan, look for a clause that will allow you to pay off the loan at any time with little or no penalty. Such a prepayment clause will keep you from being stuck with a high interest rate should market rates drop.

The good credit habits that high interest rates have forced consumers to learn will remain valid even if rates drop.

—NEA Special Services

LEISURE

Tips for Shopping by Phone

With rising gasoline prices and declining service in retail stores, shopping at home from ads or mail-order catalogs has become more popular than ever. Firms that ship goods out of state are not required to collect sales taxes—making the purchase of expensive, easily shipped items like jewelry especially attractive.

Today, more and more home shopping is being done by phone rather than mail. The advent of toll-free numbers and the almost universal use of credit cards have brought a boom in phone orders, or "telemarketing." Often you can phone in an order, bill it to your credit card, and receive your merchandise within a week.

And growing numbers of personal computer owners are now "talking" directly with the big computers of the major firms to place their orders. The time is coming when catalogs too will be computerized rather than printed, so that consumers can call up pictures and descriptions of products on their TV screens.

But "Let the buyer beware!" remains a valid warning. The Council of Better Business Bureaus reports that consumer complaints against mail-order and telemarketing firms have become all too common. Some of the problems are due to the fact that you can't be sure you'll like something until you actually see it. Often, however, the cause is a dishonest or misleading sales practice.

How can you protect yourself against being disappointed when shopping by mail or phone?

- Deal with a reputable firm that offers a money-back guarantee.
- Before ordering, make sure you understand shipping charges, delivery dates, and return policies. After you've made your purchase is *not* the time to discover shipping is extra, the delivery date is next month, or you can't return the item.
- *Never* give your credit card number to someone who calls you with a telephone offer. Con artists will call with a "special deal" that sounds too good to be true—and is. Once they have your name and card number they can run up bills through other phone-order firms and leave you holding the bag.
- If you have a problem with an order and cannot obtain satisfaction from the firm itself, contact your local consumer affairs agency, the Better Business Bureau in the community where the firm is based, the credit card company through which you made the purchase, or the Mail Order Action Line, Direct Mail/Marketing Association, 6 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017.

—NEA Special Services